Commentary
July-August 2002

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Better Health at Lower Cost? It Won't Equate Unless We Educate

by Karen L. Katen

The twenty-first century has arrived, carrying with it the benefit of ongoing medical innovation and the promise of additional scientific breakthroughs. Today, Americans have the possibility of better health and more effective healthcare than ever before, yet we are not nearly as healthy as we might be. Too many people still suffer from high blood pressure and its associated problems; millions of diabetics cannot control their disease; and men and women throughout the country delay or avoid the health screenings that might save them from cancer and heart disease.

It's not that people don't care – or don't want to know – about their health and well-being. Interest in health has never been higher, with more than 82 percent of Americans wanting a more active role in managing their healthcare. The problem isn't one of interest but of understanding. Too often, people cannot understand the health information they receive from medical professionals, other caregivers, neighbors, or the Internet.

Health literacy – the ability to read, understand, and act upon health information – is fundamental to promoting human health and improving healthcare. Yet in health care settings around the country, the health literacy of patients is often taken for granted. Every day, medical caregivers assume that patients can read, understand, and fill out medical history questionnaires, insurance papers, consent forms, educational pamphlets, and prescription information. But many patients cannot, and their resulting loss of self-esteem and motivation can undermine their opportunities for improved health.

Unfortunately, low health literacy disproportionately affects some of our most vulnerable populations: the poor, the elderly, certain ethnic minorities, and often the chronically ill. At a time when consumers are taking more responsibility for their own healthcare, it is imperative that these groups do not get left behind.

Abandoning these people and others who suffer from poor health literacy is not only unconscionable - it also places a tremendous burden on

Health literacy – the ability to read, understand, and act upon health information – is fundamental to promoting human health and improving healthcare

society. The costs associated with the resulting public health problems – including more frequent and lengthy emergency room and hospital visits, increased Medicare and Medicaid expenditures, and greater out-of-pocket costs incurred by patients – could reach as high as $73 billion annually.

But the most important cost is unacceptable human suffering. Adverse health outcomes, such as prolonged sickness and increased morbidity and mortality, are associated with low health literacy. It is unthinkable that with all of the treatments and cures provided by modern science and technology, patients continue to suffer health problems because they cannot understand health instructions, access and use the services available to them and, in short, manage their own health.

Clearly, physicians have the primary challenge in communicating with their patients, but hospitals, health insurers, government agencies, pharmacies, and pharmaceutical companies also bear an important responsibility. Patient communications often meet scientific or regulatory standards but fall well below an individual's ability to understand.

Solving a problem of this complexity requires the articulation of a compelling vision, alignment to a common set of goals, and energetic partnerships among all of those affected: patients and physicians, employers and employees, and the private and public sectors. Pfizer has made a significant commitment to funding long-term research that will help us learn more about the causes, consequences, and remedies of low health literacy. While we await the results of this needed research, we can take some steps immediately.

As a beginning, we can ensure that all health-related communications are simple enough for everyone to understand. At Pfizer, we are redesigning all of our patient-directed communications to meet this standard. We are also striving to make those communications culturally relevant and linguistically accessible to our increasingly diverse population. Government, hospitals, and social service organizations should do the same.

Tackling low health literacy may not seem as glamorous or dramatic as harnessing the genomic revolution to produce a "miracle cure." There are no easy answers or sweeping solutions. But the millions of people who suffer from this condition will be helped sooner and more dramatically by diligence and dedication to this cause than by any science I can see. And it must be done. Our shared belief in doing all that we can do to improve the health of all people requires it. Nothing less will do.

Karen L. Katen is Executive Vice President of Pfizer Inc, President of Pfizer Global Pharmaceuticals, and President, U.S. Pharmaceuticals.

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Commentary
July-August 2002

Letters from Readers

Counterintelligence

To the Editor:

In his article "How Inept Is the FBI?" [May], Gabriel Schoenfeld raises questions about my "disinterestedness" in reviewing two books about the Wen Ho Lee affair for the *Weekly Standard*. In fact, the editors there asked me not to use the review as a forum to defend myself against the allegations made in the Bellows report, the Justice Department analysis of the case performed by the federal prosecutor Randy Bellows. These allegations concerned my role as the director of intelligence at the Department of Energy (DOE), where I was indeed responsible, as Mr. Schoenfeld says, for the 1996 report, known as an Administrative Inquiry or AI, alleging that a breach of classified information had occurred at Los Alamos, although some parts of the media have vastly overblown my role.

I stand by my statement in the *Weekly Standard* that if the investigation were to begin again today, Wen Ho Lee would still be a prime suspect. Mr. Schoenfeld says there is "reason to doubt this assertion," but the Bellows report clearly states that a full counterintelligence investigation of Lee was warranted. It also makes clear that such an investigation was never conducted. The FBI did little or nothing from 1993 to 1999 to advance the case, despite the clear warnings in its own files about Lee's activities. When he was finally interviewed by the FBI in 1999, new information about his interactions with Chinese scientists began to emerge—details that he had withheld from the FBI and the DOE until then.

At that point, however, the interviews conducted by the FBI were primarily for the purpose of closing out the case and pronouncing Lee "not guilty." Only after learning that the polygraph examination given to Lee by a DOE contractor was badly flawed did the FBI subject Lee to a polygraph of its own, which he promptly failed. Significantly, he "bombed" two of the key questions involving his alleged provision of information about both the W-88 nuclear warhead and our nuclear-weapons codes to unauthorized persons.

But once the FBI learned that Lee had been illegally creating his own nuclear-weapons library, the nature of the case changed to a criminal investigation. The focus thereafter was on why Lee had made the tapes and what he had done with them. This criminal case ignored the very valid counterintelligence leads that had recently emerged, quite likely because they would have led back to China.

Mr. Schoenfeld repeats the allegation in the Bellows report that I "derailed" the case from the start by asserting that the W-88 "had definitely been compromised by espionage" and by directing exclusive attention to Wen Ho Lee. The government has steadfastly refused to declassify any part of my 1996 report, so it has been difficult for me to defend my own role in producing it.

The premise of my inquiry was indeed that the Chinese had acquired classified information on the W-88 nuclear warhead; this premise was subsequently confirmed by a 1999 interagency intelligence assessment. The inquiry that I conducted at DOE was constrained, however, by agreements with the FBI to look for potential leads only within the Energy Department complex. We did not have the authority to look beyond DOE facilities—at, for example, the Defense Department, the Navy, or Navy contractors. The FBI told us its agents would investigate these organizations; they never did.

Moreover, there were few "disinterested" parties assisting Bellows as he prepared his May 2000 report.

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The FBI, by this time, was in the midst of a major campaign to cover its own tracks. For example, it had to conceal the fact that a very experienced agent had assisted in my 1996 DOE inquiry, that the FBI had approved the approach we had used, that FBI and DOE personnel had met repeatedly to ensure that the inquiry was on track, and that FBI agents had reviewed preliminary drafts of the inquiry report. In fact, an FBI agent had first inserted Wen Ho Lee's name into such a draft. When the report was transmitted to the FBI in late May 1996, it included potential investigative leads beyond Wen Ho Lee, and the FBI assured DOE that it would aggressively pursue each of them. It did not.

Mr. Schoenfeld appears to be unfamiliar with congressional reports investigating the government's handling of this case, particularly one issued by the Senate Judiciary Committee. That report makes a number of observations germane to the allegations against me. First, it documents the "top-level assault" on the Energy Department's 1996 inquiry by both the Justice Department and the FBI that began in 1999, long after the report had been given to the FBI. It provides a devastating critique of the performance of the FBI's Albuquerque field office, which ran the case. And it states: "A fair reading of the document [the DOE report] also shows that the authors explicitly recognized the limitations of their investigation and recommended that the Lees [Wen Ho Lee and his wife] and Los Alamos be a starting place for an investigation into the loss of the W-88 information, an investigation that would necessarily extend well beyond the Lees and Los Alamos."

That investigation never happened and now probably never will. The Bush administration has shown no interest in learning the source of China's acquisition of design information for the most modern thermonuclear warhead in the world.

NOTRA TRULOCK
Falls Church, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

As a former FBI counterintelligence agent who—due solely to polygraph charts—was falsely accused of engaging in espionage for Israel, I found Gabriel Schoenfeld's article to be on target. In my own case, a furious two-year investigation ended with a grudging exoneration.

Mr. Schoenfeld is one of the depressingly few writers to recognize the costly delusion of using the polygraph to protect national security. He correctly notes that traitors have defeated the device repeatedly—most recently Ana Belen Montes, who was spying for Cuba while serving as the Pentagon's top analyst of Cuban affairs. Incredibly, one of the conditions of her plea bargain is that she submit to regular polygraph tests. Linking this back to Wen Ho Lee and Chinese espionage, there are disturbing indications, noted by the *Washington Post* (October 19, 2000), that the CIA spurned a potentially invaluable 1995 walk-in purporting to be a Chinese missile expert because he "failed" a polygraph.

Despite not having what Mr. Schoenfeld calls "a thinking man's approach to law enforcement," under the right conditions the FBI is capable of spectacular work born of thoroughness and determination. Where the target does not fit neatly into its investigative templates, however, or where imagination and agility are more important than thoroughness, the FBI's stultifying bureaucracy and ossified thinking are debilitating obstacles.

Mr. Schoenfeld asks whether an indirect link exists between the blunders of the Wen Ho Lee investigation and the case of the mole Robert Hanssen. For me the issue is larger, and already answered by Mr. Schoenfeld: the organization learns nothing and forgets nothing. For example, while the Aldrich Ames case and now the Ana Belen Montes case (and others) should have demonstrated the susceptibility of the polygraph to defeat (the false-negative problem, that is, the device's failure to recognize lies in all cases), my own experience should have demonstrated the dangers of embarking on monumentally wasteful investigations instigated by polygraph results suggesting deception (the false-positive problem, that is, the device's failure to recognize truthful responses in all cases). Instead, in the wake of the Hanssen case the FBI has inexplicably concluded that the polygraph, which has never caught a single spy, ought to be embraced even more.

Incidentally, the original polygraph results that exculpated Wen Ho Lee were themselves re-characterized by the FBI to conform to their subsequent suspicion of his guilt. All this typifies an organization that is more prosecutorial than objective and that resists change, accountability, and critical self-evaluation.

MARK MALLAH
San Francisco, California

TO THE EDITOR:

The war in Afghanistan makes it clear that the four branches of the American military know what they are doing. The problem—and Gabriel Schoenfeld is right to call it a major problem—lies in our intelligence and counterintelligence services. Unfortunately, and with all due respect to his excellent article, we do not need Gabriel Schoenfeld to tell us what a terrifyingly lousy job they are doing.

If Wen Ho Lee is guilty of spying, what is he doing free? If he is innocent, then why was he persecuted and held under harsh conditions or any conditions? Either way, this was not one of the finer moments of American law enforcement and counterintelligence.

BRUCE BRAGER
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

The present ineptness of the FBI can be traced to the hiring policies of Louis Freeh, FBI director throughout the entire eight years of Bill Clinton's administration.

At Freeh's confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate, he was asked what his employment policies would be. He replied that his highest priority would be to hire minorities and women. The consequence of eight years of hiring FBI staff for political correctness rather than for merit is the root cause of the agency's problem today.

NORMAN FINE
Sewell, New Jersey

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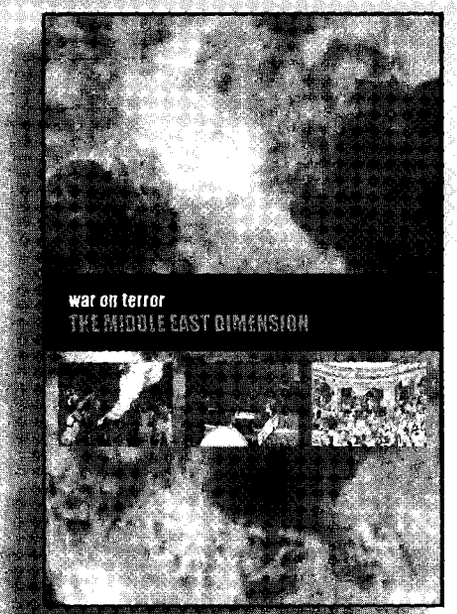

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EDITED BY ROBERT B. SATLOFF

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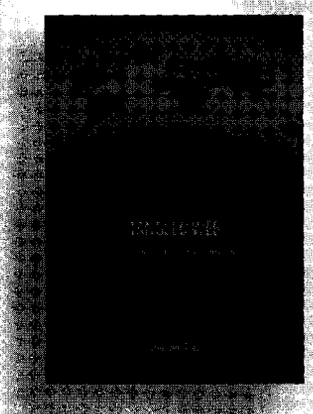

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GABRIEL SCHOENFELD writes:

In my essay I wondered why Notra Trulock, in writing about the Wen Ho Lee affair in the *Weekly Standard*, failed to rebut or even to mention the serious allegations leveled against him in the Bellows report, some of which I then enumerated.

In particular, I noted that according to Bellows's reconstruction of events, Mr. Trulock's 1996 AI report had suppressed the conclusions of a group of experts who expressed serious doubts about whether the W-88 warhead had been compromised by espionage. Instead of conveying their reservations on this score, Mr. Trulock allegedly imparted "blatantly inaccurate" information to the FBI. This information then led the Bureau to focus almost exclusively on Wen Ho Lee and his wife while ignoring, as I wrote, "hundreds if not thousands of other suspects, in a crime that may not have occurred in the first place."

In his letter to COMMENTARY, Mr. Trulock now attempts to respond to some of these charges. Does he do so convincingly?

Let us begin with the charge that Mr. Trulock suppressed accurate information and purveyed inaccurate information to the FBI. All he says in his defense here is that a 1999 interagency intelligence study confirmed his original findings. Whether this 1999 study does in fact vindicate the substance of Mr. Trulock's report is by no means a settled matter. But even if we grant him the benefit of the doubt, that would hardly justify his having suppressed a dissenting view offered by a body of government experts. Nor could it justify his having provided inaccurate information to the FBI, a grave charge against a security official in a matter involving intelligence. In his letter to COMMENTARY, Mr. Trulock sidesteps the only question that is truly pertinent here: *did* he suppress information and/or purvey "blatantly inaccurate" information, as charged?

A second issue is whether Mr. Trulock zeroed in exclusively on the Lees even before identifying and ruling out all other potential suspects. In attempting to demonstrate that he did not select them as the *only* likely suspects, Mr. Trulock now states that he was compelled "by agreements with the FBI to look for potential leads only within the Energy Department complex" and that he "did not have the authority to look beyond DOE facilities—at, for example, the Defense Department, the Navy, or Navy contractors."

This is a dodge. The Defense Department and the Navy are hardly the issue. The Bellows report makes it clear that even at DOE facilities under Mr. Trulock's purview, like Pantex and Sandia National laboratory (SNL), a thorough search for other suspects was never conducted by Mr. Trulock or his subordinates. Even worse, the FBI was led to believe that records at various DOE facilities had been scoured for suspects when in fact they had not been.

Bellows's analysis of the successive drafts of Mr. Trulock's 1996 AI report is particularly telling. It seems that statements revealing lacunae were deleted from the final version of the AI presented to the FBI, creating, in the words of the Bellows report, "the inaccurate perception that the AI had exhausted leads at locations that were never ever visited, such as Pantex and SNL, and that the review was more thorough than it actually was at those locations that were visited." In the categorical words of the Bellows report, Mr. Trulock "oversold the AI as a more thorough and comprehensive document than it actually was."

To reiterate, the pertinent issue is not whether the FBI did a proper job scrutinizing the Pentagon or the Navy but whether Mr. Trulock did a proper job scrutinizing all DOE sites where work on the W-88 was performed. This is an issue he also sidesteps.

Finally, Mr. Trulock calls into question the impartiality of the Bellows report, noting that it emanated from the Justice Department and was prepared with assistance from the FBI, two agencies with fixed agendas and sorry records of their own. Mr. Trulock further alleges that the FBI, while assisting in the preparation of the Bellows report, "was in the midst of a major campaign to cover its own tracks."

This line of argument is unpersuasive. For one thing, if the FBI was indeed engaged in a cover-up as it aided Randy Bellows, it failed miserably. The Bellows report is, after all, utterly unsparing in its assessment of the Bureau's bungling; I cited some of its withering language in my essay. For another thing, the Bellows report highlights precisely those facts that Mr. Trulock says the FBI was trying so hard to bury. Mr. Trulock, for example, states that the FBI was especially at pains "to conceal the fact that a very experienced agent had assisted in my 1996 DOE inquiry." But that fact is right there in black and white on page 343 of the Bellows report, where we learn that a "knowledgeable and experienced FBI agent" was intimately involved in the production of Mr. Trulock's report.

For still another thing, if the Bellows report is flawed and biased against him, as Mr. Trulock now suggests, why has he himself repeatedly cited it uncritically in his own defense? Writing recently in the *Washington Times*, for example, Mr. Trulock emphasized the authoritativeness of the report by calling attention to the fact that it was conducted by a "senior federal prosecutor" who had "reviewed 42,000 classified government documents and interviewed nearly 175 participants" in the Lee case. As in the *Weekly Standard* (where he now explains he was enjoined from commenting on the Bellows report by the editors), he did not refer to or attempt to rebut the report's harsh judgment of his own role in precipitating the Wen Ho Lee fiasco. Even more notably, when the Bellows report was first made available to the public this past December, Mr. Trulock's attorney issued a statement to the press under the flat and unqualified headline: "Bellows Report Exonerates Notra Trulock."

The Bellows report *does* exonerate Mr. Trulock—on the narrow issue of whether he was motivated by racial prejudice as he pursued Wen Ho Lee. But it is mendacious spin control to proclaim the report an exoneration of Notra Trulock

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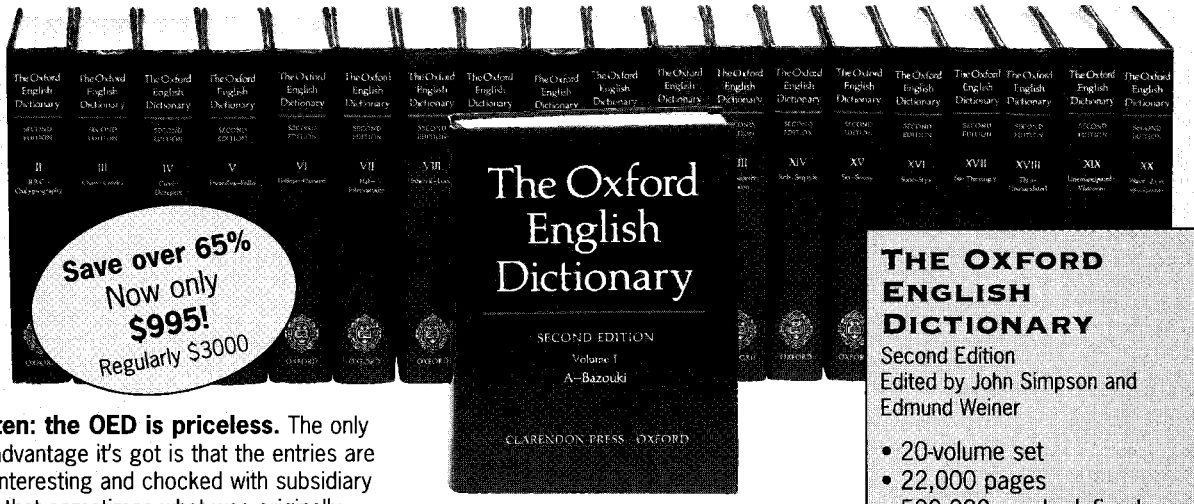

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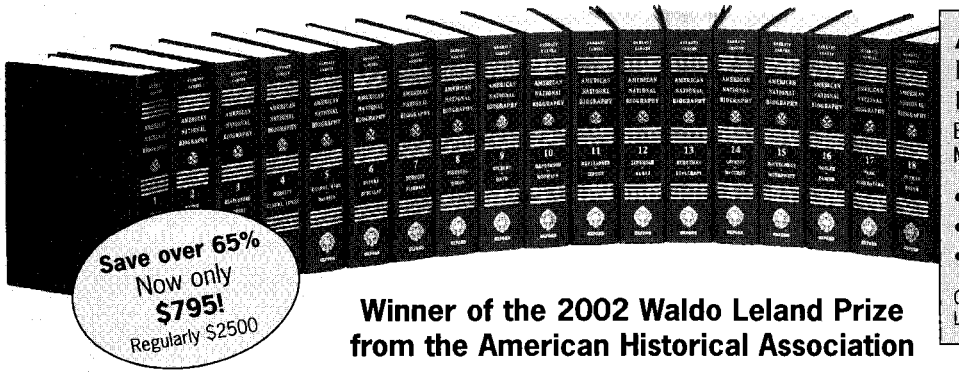

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when in fact it is an unremitting indictment of him. Beyond the allegations I have already examined, the report contains a long litany of other grievances about Mr. Trulock's 1996 Administrative Inquiry. That document, it states, was "so poorly written and organized that this alone made it difficult to evaluate and comprehend"; it "contained very serious deficiencies, including numerous inconsistent and contradictory statements as well as unsubstantiated assertions"; it was "a slapdash affair," "a deeply flawed product," and the fruit of "a woefully inadequate and cursory investigation."

In writing my essay for COMMENTARY, I was keenly aware of this intense criticism of Mr. Trulock. I also had found nothing in the various studies issued by Congress that contradicted the Bellows report on any major point, including the Senate report cited by Mr. Trulock in his letter. But, not knowing his side of the story, I was cautious in assessing his role, limiting myself to a footnote questioning his "disinterestedness" and trying to explain why I disagreed with him, while also expressing puzzlement over his apparent unwillingness to comment on the accusations against him in the Bellows report.

Now my opinion has shifted. Hailing the Bellows report for exonerating him on one day, and turning around on the next day to suggest that it is part of a "top-level assault," Mr. Trulock makes mincemeat of his own credibility. This behavior and his wholly inadequate and misleading rejoinder to the accusations against him leave me little reason to doubt that the Bellows report was justified in stating that the Department of Energy, under Mr. Trulock's guidance, "compromised and undermined the FBI's own investigative efforts" from the very start. And if the Bellows report is right about that, then Mr. Trulock's misconduct did immense damage to our government's ability to combat the very real and ongoing Chinese espionage that he was ostensibly investigating.

MARK MALLAH calls attention to the FBI's heavy reliance on polygraph exams (an issue raised in an entirely different connection by Notra Trulock as well). I am in strong agreement with the views expressed by Mr. Mallah. Indeed, it is worth saying a few words about what happened inside the CIA in the wake of the Aldrich Ames case when the agency launched a "Quality Assurance Program" to insure more "consistent" polygraph results.

According to a recent report on FBI internal security issued by William H. Webster in the aftermath of the Hanssen debacle, the CIA had been led by its inaptly named "Quality Assurance Program" to devote heightened attention to the many agents who exhibited "significant physiological responses," i.e., indications of possible deception, during routine polygraph examinations. This in turn created what the Webster report rather delicately describes as a "difficult period" within the CIA.

What exactly was going on in the CIA during this "difficult period"? One unpleasant development was the appearance of what became known as the "A to Z cases." These consisted of several hundred agents whose honesty was called into question by the polygraph machine but who could neither be conclusively cleared nor condemned by further investigation and were placed in a limbo status. "Some of these cases," according to the Webster report, "were open for years, causing delays in assignments and promotions."

In due course, these officers came to be known within the agency as "ghosts." The way these ghosts were shunted aside, according to the report, had "a devastating effect on morale and undermined confidence in the polygraph." In the end, many of the ghosts were permitted to come back to life (and to resume their work as spooks!) after being cleared.

In light of the ravaging effects of the polygraph program on the CIA, one would have expected the FBI to think twice about its own use of these machines. No such luck. Instead, the Webster report recommended that the Bureau *follow* the CIA's example and introduce its own "enhanced" lie-detector regime, while also counseling that it "upgrade the technical instruments."

ALTHOUGH BRUCE BRAGER says he agrees with me, I am afraid I do not entirely agree with him. One (and by no means the most important) reason the FBI had such difficulty with the Wen Ho Lee case had to do with the extremely puzzling and suspicion-arousing conduct of Lee himself. This is what impelled me to agree with both Notra Trulock and the Bellows report that Lee was caught in a web largely of his own weaving, and that a full counterintelligence investigation of him was warranted. But for the reasons I gave in my article, I would still demur from Mr. Trulock's continuing insistence that Wen Ho Lee remains the "prime" suspect in the compromise of the W-88.

As for the "terrifyingly lousy" job Bruce Brager says the FBI has been doing in counterterrorism, the revelations about the Bureau's lapses since my essay appeared make his characterization especially apt. I referred to the battle waged between the Minnesota field office and Washington headquarters following the arrest of Zacharias Moussaoui in mid-August 2001. We now know a great deal more about that episode, thanks to the memorandum written by the FBI attorney/whistleblower Coleen Rowley.

Among other things, we learn from it that even *after* the attack of September 11, FBI headquarters continued to block any steps to obtain the search warrant needed to examine Moussaoui's laptop computer. The FBI supervisor in charge of the case, wrote Rowley, was "almost deliberately thwarting the Minneapolis FBI agents' efforts," and had dismissed as a "mere coincidence" the conjunction of the World Trade Center attack with the suspicions of agents in Minnesota about Moussaoui. The motivation of this supervisory agent was evidently not that of a wrecker or a mole, but sheer timidity in an agency whose headquarters, according to Rowley, are "mired in mediocrity."

The reforms now being introduced by FBI director

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Robert Mueller are undoubtedly a step in the right direction, but wholly inadequate to what the situation demands. Indeed, some of the new procedures only serve to underscore the Bureau's dysfunctional culture.

Thus, up until the new investigative rules were promulgated, FBI agents were strictly forbidden to conduct research on the Internet or in public libraries unless they were gathering material directly related to an open investigation. These restrictions on web browsing and library visitation, according to a Justice Department memo, "extended even to publicly available information that everyone else is free to access, and even to information that could plainly be valuable in generally facilitating investigative activities and preventing terrorism."

With the Bureau being reformed, are we now in safer hands? Under its new and more aggressive approach, FBI agents are today free to enter public libraries and engage in what is described as "general topical research." On their computers, "pure surfing" of the web is also permitted. Agents can even enter Internet chat rooms without filling out permission forms in triplicate and waiting for approval from headquarters. Terrorists and enemies of America everywhere must be trembling in their boots—from mirth.

THIS BRINGS me to the issue of FBI hiring practices raised by Norman Fine. It is certainly true that the FBI has been subjected to a full dose of affirmative action, thanks to the Clinton administration and, I would add, a U.S. Congress that is now blaming the Bureau for leaving us vulnerable on September 11. But whether such employment practices did in fact play a decisive role, a contributory role, or no role at all in the failure to avert the disaster is impossible to determine.

What is fairly striking, however, is that, for months *after* September 11, those aspiring to become FBI special agents were still being required to fill out "equal-opportunity" background statements in which they were asked not only to specify their race and ethnicity but also to indicate whether they suffered from such disabilities as "complete paralysis," "convulsive disorder," "mental or emotional illness," "missing extremities," or, most fittingly in light of the breathtaking absurdity of this affirmative-action employment document, "mental retardation."

Immigration

TO THE EDITOR:

Tamar Jacoby's article ["Too Many Immigrants?," April] sent shock waves through our little immigration-reform community, not so much because of her arguments as because of her unwontedly civil tone, which we appreciated. Still, her arguments are not impressive, essentially because she has not fully grasped the critique of post-1965 immigration policy made by groups like ours. We have posted a full analysis of her article at www.vdare. com/misc/tamar_jacoby.htm.

She seems unaware, for example, of the National Research Council's 1997 study, *The New Americans*, which confirmed the consensus among labor economists that the immigrant influx since 1965 has brought *no significant net aggregate economic benefit* to the native-born population. America, in other words, is being transformed for nothing. I wrote about this widespread agreement among economists as long ago as 1995 in my book *Alien Nation*. But I know from bitter experience that most commentators are interested not in the economics of immigration but in the race-related aspects of the issue. Tamar Jacoby is no exception.

In this regard, it is interesting that she mistells the story of Virginia Dare, the first white child born in the New World, in whose honor our webzine VDARE.com is named. Dare was not "kidnapped as a baby and never seen again." Instead, she vanished with the rest of what became known as the "lost colony" on Roanoke Island off the North Carolina coast. Tamar Jacoby could have easily checked this on our website. There she would also have seen that we actually satirize the miscegenation fears she (civilly) imputes to us.

She is also mistaken when she says that those at VDARE.com "make no secret of their concern about the way America's original Anglo-Saxon stock is being transformed by immigration." This is a peculiar claim to make about a website many of whose writers are not "Anglo-Saxons." It is true, of course, that we acknowledge the American nation's very specific ethnocultural core. This core, in our opinion, makes America much like the great nations of Europe and confounds the fashionable myth of the "creedal nation" that can absorb anyone who signs on the dotted line.

PETER BRIMELOW
Center For American Unity
Warrenton, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

Is it possible to control immigration? Tamar Jacoby answers in the negative. This view is common not only among advocates of mass immigration but even among some of its critics. Fortunately, it is also wrong. Migration is not like the weather; it is a product of government policies. This is because no one wakes up in, say, Bolivia and declares, "Today I will move to New Jersey." Push and pull factors are important (poverty and bad government at home, freedom and economic opportunity abroad), but networks of relatives and friends already in the U.S. are necessary to bring the push and the pull together. And these networks are largely created by government actions.

The argument that immigration is inevitable and not fully controllable is strongest in the case of Mexico, but even in this case it falls short. The wave of illegal immigration we have seen over the past several decades is a direct result of networks created by the Bracero program, a scheme to import farmworkers run by the federal government from the 1940's to the 1960's. Sociologists have found that the best predictor of a Mexican's propensity to move to the U.S. is whether he already has a relative here. Indeed, the states in west-central Mexico that sent the most Bracero workers continue to be disproportionately represented in today's immigration flow.

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It is not too late to do something about this problem. The border patrol has proved quite effective in directing illegal crossings away from border cities toward more remote areas where enforcement is easier, and the stepped-up enforcement since September 11 has been even more successful at curbing crossings. Yet even the most sophisticated border control cannot work without enforcement of the prohibition against hiring illegal immigrants and an end to extended-family "chain migration." Tamar Jacoby claims that business would never accept such changes, and resistance has been indeed fierce. But we live in a different world now, one where ineffective immigration controls can threaten our lives.

The narrow interests that benefit from mass immigration may continue to prevail against growing public dissatisfaction, but to assume that such an outcome is inevitable is to accept a kind of anti-democratic determinism.

MARK KRIKORIAN
Center for Immigration Studies
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

Tamar Jacoby argues that the best way to eliminate illegal immigration is to fulfill the country's demand for cheap labor. To achieve this, she says, the U.S. should issue visas to people in countries like Mexico based on "the natural rise and fall of supply and demand" for labor while taking more effective measures against the thousands of illegal immigrants who come pouring across our borders.

But this argument is severely flawed. Not only is the government incapable of calculating supply and demand and adjusting policy accordingly—this is why Communism failed—but the demand for illegal labor would remain unchanged by raising the numbers of legal immigrants, since the main benefit of such workers is that they are willing to work for less than the minimum wage. There would continue to be an incentive to sneak across the border. To combat this problem Tamar Jacoby proposes "serious enforcement measures," but I do not see what enforcement measures could be effective, short of erecting what she calls "the equivalent of a Berlin Wall along the Rio Grande," an action she rightly dismisses as unrealistic.

But the main flaw with her analysis is that she overestimates the significance of unskilled labor to the U.S. economy. Ours is not an agrarian society; the bulk of our gross domestic product comes from the innovations of companies like G.E., Microsoft, and Boeing. One of the major reasons our economy has become the world leader in such sectors is that we have traditionally attracted *skilled* immigrants from around the world. Contrary to Tamar Jacoby, basing our immigration policy on meritocratic principles would not "smack of a very un-American elitism." To close the door on an engineer who may start the next Microsoft in order to admit a person who is willing to mow lawns is neither un-American nor elitist—it is simply foolhardy.

DAVID GULKO
Fairlawn, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Tamar Jacoby fails to address one of the major negative consequences of mass immigration: the assault on the traditional American ideal of equality of opportunity for individuals—regardless of race, creed, color, or sex—in the name of equality of result for groups. What is now called "diversity" means, in practice, preference for so-called "oppressed" groups (women, blacks, Latinos, and non-English speakers) and discrimination against individuals in so-called "dominant" groups (Anglos, males, whites, and English-speakers).

The convergence of mass immigration and group preferences has provided group-rights advocates with both a plausible rationale to influence public opinion and a critical mass of supporters. Latinos, for example, opposed California's 1996 referendum against racial preferences. Moderate levels of immigration, combined with vigorous efforts to assimilate newcomers into the American way of life, would work fine, but unfortunately this sensible approach is not our current policy.

JOHN FONTE
Hudson Institute
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR:

It is hard to argue against Tamar Jacoby's premise that we ought to let people into the country based on the need for their labor. But her claim that "compared with this, any other criterion for immigration policy . . . sinks into irrelevancy" is wrong. For Americans in general, and for Jews in particular, immigration has serious non-economic implications.

The terrorist attacks of September 11 and the subsequent intensification of the Middle East conflict have made several things clear. First, Israel's physical survival and ability to defend itself depend almost entirely on continued U.S. support. Second, America's Muslims are starting to challenge seriously the political power of America's Jews. It is estimated that there are now anywhere from 2.5 to 4 million Muslims in this country. Without a change in immigration patterns, it is likely that they will outnumber Jews here within a decade. Anyone who thinks that this development will not alter U.S. policy toward the Jewish state need only look at what has happened in other democracies—France, Britain, and Germany—in which Muslims outnumber Jews.

There are disturbing indications that Muslims are beginning to flex their political muscle in this country as well. Pro-Palestinian groups are increasingly asserting themselves on American college campuses, and are demanding that their schools divest themselves of stock in corporations that do business with Israel.

Norman Podhoretz wrote that his shift from liberalism to neoconservatism was motivated in part by the unwillingness of left-wing intellectuals, particularly Jewish ones, to address the rising tide of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism on the Left. He suggested that Jewish writers pondering political issues should feel free to ask the age-old question, "is it good for the Jews?"—and to do so without fear of reflecting a "mentality no broader than that of the tribe." Now that the Jews appear to be in deep trouble again, are COMMENTARY's authors so

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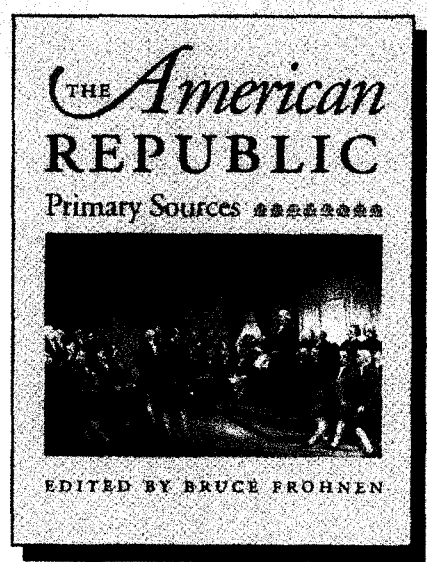

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beholden to free-market ideology that they can no longer ask this question without embarrassment?

SETH FORMAN
State University of New York, Stonybrook
Hauppauge, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Recent European experience shows what can be expected from allowing massive immigration to continue from the Muslim world into the United States. Since it would be politically and morally difficult to restrict immigration from a single group of countries, one solution would be to curtail overall immigration. Alternatively, immigrants might be required to abjure allegiance to groups deemed to be terrorist organizations by the U.S., precisely as was once done with members of the Nazi and Communist parties.

ROBERT LERNER
Rockville, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR:

Tamar Jacoby fails to mention the ways in which refugees have been affected by post-September 11 immigration policy. Even before the attacks, the U.S. was admitting steadily fewer refugees; the target of 70,000 that President Bush has set for 2002 is half the level of ten years ago. A "security review" has now slowed admissions so much that at the current rate America will admit barely 20,000 refugees this year, less than a quarter of the annual average admitted during the 1990's.

The security benefits of this policy are dubious: refugees are the most scrutinized of immigrants, screened by the FBI and other agencies before admission. Considering the relative ease of obtaining tourist and student visas, a terrorist would have to be crazy to try to enter the United States by joining the ranks of the world's 14 million refugees.

But the humanitarian costs are clear: America's door is closing on the world's most severely dispossessed people, and governments that send asylum-seekers back to sea (Australia) or deport refugees to homelessness in the Balkans (Germany) are now feeling less pressure from Washington to reverse their cruel practices.

PHILIP PETERS
Lexington Institute
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

Tamar Jacoby proposes that the United States institute an immigration policy under which unskilled immigrants can enter this country legally and become permanent U.S. residents.

It is certainly possible to admit people—along with their families—on a temporary basis to do unskilled labor; we now have such visa categories for artists, athletes, intra-company employees, and those in "specialty occupations." The question is: when their time has expired, should they be able to adjust their status, receive a "green card," and become permanent residents? How should such a status be granted, and what criteria should be applied?

Aliens who find themselves in deportation proceedings can resort to a form of relief called "cancellation of removal." An immigration judge can grant permanent-resident status to an alien who has been in the country a certain number of years, has good moral character (no criminal convictions), and has demonstrated that his removal from the U.S. would constitute a particular level of hardship to a spouse, child, or parent with legal status here.

Though "hardship" is the main legal issue around which the discretion of the judge revolves, when an alien applies for this kind of relief the judge typically examines the extent to which he and his family have integrated into the surrounding community and practiced the norms of law-abiding Americans. Have they filed tax returns regularly? Do they hold jobs, or have they resorted to public assistance? Those who have taken classes in English (rather than using the bilingual-education option) almost always make a more positive impression. On the other hand, a judge tends to view less favorably an application from families with teenagers who have failing grades or cannot speak English fluently.

The U.S. could institute a similar regimen for temporary unskilled workers. Upon expiration of their temporary status, they could become permanent residents by demonstrating to the satisfaction of the INS that they had put down sufficient roots in the country, and had been sufficiently acculturated to life in the United States.

EDWARD S. REISMAN
Santa Monica, California

TO THE EDITOR:

In her otherwise incisive article, Tamar Jacoby might have commented on the history of anti-immigration feeling in the U.S. At least since the 1820's, such sentiment has been variously expressed in the Know-Nothing party, in the anti-Catholic slogan "rum, Romanism, and ruin," in fear of the "yellow peril," in anti-Italian prejudice, in restrictive quotas aimed at Jews, and in recent discrimination against Vietnamese refugees. The arguments over the years have been similar to those Tamar Jacoby cites: that a surfeit of immigrants who refuse to assimilate into the melting pot will make our lives untenable and take jobs away from American workers. In a short space of time, however, each "they" became part of the "we" that is America's greatness.

DONALD FELDSTEIN
Teaneck, New Jersey

TAMAR JACOBY writes:

I am glad Peter Brimelow appreciates what he calls the "civil tone" of my article, but from his other comments it is hard to believe he has read it. How otherwise could he claim that I am "interested not in the economics of immigration but in the race-related aspects of the issue," when the very essence of my argument is that we ought to bring immigration law more into line with the reality of the marketplace—and when my criticism of groups like his focuses precisely on their preoccupation with racial issues?

I am, in any case, very familiar with the National Research Council (NRC) study Mr. Brimelow cites—and which, by the way, he completely mischaracterizes. Far from positing "no significant net economic benefit" from immigration, the report calculates "a significant positive gain," perhaps as large as $10 billion a year—and, as the NRC

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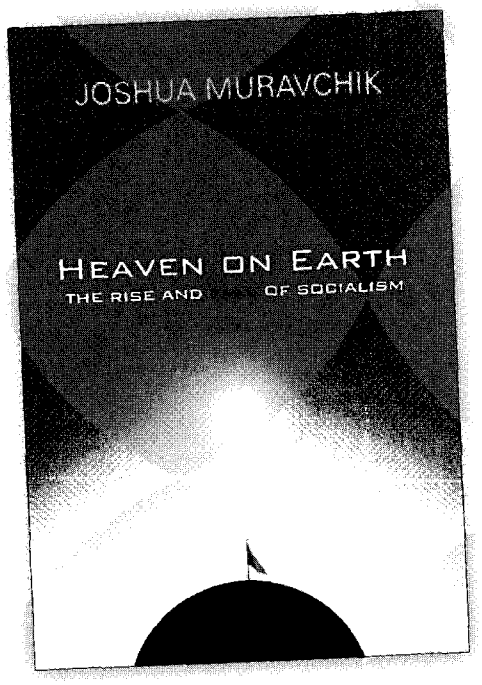

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authors themselves point out, theirs is a highly conservative estimate. Well aware of the conflict that surrounds these issues, they confined themselves to computing the most tangible and easily calculated economic gains—primarily the difference between the wages paid to immigrants and the value of the goods and services they produce. They thus left out all manner of economic ripple effects (remember, immigrants too buy groceries and shoes and cars and washing machines), productivity gains (due in part to the innovations of highly skilled immigrants but also, in the case of the less skilled, to the way they free up native-born workers to do what they do most productively), the impact of immigrant-owned businesses, the consequences of immigrant-led revitalization of urban neighborhoods, and so forth. All of this is extremely hard to estimate, which is why the NRC did not try and why I did not report any of the speculative figures put forward in recent years by other economists. But make no mistake: very few honest students of immigration think there is *no* net economic gain.

Of course, many economists who recognize the windfall still oppose the current influx on other grounds, as they have every right to do. But I wish Mr. Brimelow would stop trying to disguise his concerns—most of them stemming from immigration's effect on what he euphemistically calls the nation's "ethno-cultural" make-up—in the garb of economic argument.

Mark Krikorian raises an interesting and, as I am sure he knows, much disputed question that deserves fuller treatment than it can be given here. Let me simply point out how much he overstates the case when he claims that "migration is a product of government policies." In fact, as he himself goes on to argue, it is a product of many things, including past migration patterns, current immigrant networks, global economic forces, the new global interconnectedness, domestic labor needs, and much more. Some of these factors can be traced in part, though rarely entirely, to past government policies, and some of them are amenable to government regulation—to some degree. But in the end, I am afraid, it is simply unrealistic to imagine that the U.S. government can somehow turn immigration on and off like a kitchen faucet.

That said, Mr. Krikorian's impulses are surely right: no nation wants to be in a position where it cannot control its borders—where it cannot keep track of who or how many are entering, or where its laws are overmatched by forces it can hardly monitor, let alone check or regulate. All the more reason, in my view, for a sensible immigration policy more consistent with the realities of today's world—a realistic policy that can be realistically enforced. Instead of a Prohibition-like regime we cannot possibly hope to maintain in the face of the actual annual flow, does it not make sense to bring our quotas more into line with the world as it is—quotas we could then make stick, generating a legal influx we could hope to keep track of? Indeed, this would seem imperative in the wake of September 11.

As for who would benefit from this more practical approach, it is hard to know what to say to Mr. Krikorian's absurd implication that American prosperity somehow benefits only a "narrow interest"—and, in his view, an apparently despicable interest, at that. Surely not just business but the American people as a whole have a stake in a more realistic immigration policy that can at once bolster our economy and allow us to restore a measure of badly needed control on our borders.

DAVID GULKO reads my piece as a call for turning the U.S. into a command economy. In fact, what I advocate is a policy that gives *freer* rein to market forces: immigrant quotas high enough to accommodate the unfettered ebb and flow of supply and demand. As for Mr. Gulko's suggestion that we are harming ourselves by admitting busboys at the expense of doctors, lawyers, and engineers, under the immigration policy I propose we would not have to choose. There is no reason why we cannot admit enough foreign workers to accommodate our very real—but by no means unlimited or unmanageable—needs at both ends of the economic spectrum.

John Fonte makes the common mistake of assuming that to be in favor of continued immigration—at current levels or somewhat higher—is ipso facto to be opposed to assimilation. But that is nonsense. I favor both continued immigration and assimilation very strongly—and, like Mr. Fonte, I would like to see some changes in the way we as a nation talk about and foster assimilation. But I also believe that America will prove more than capable of absorbing even the great wave of newcomers arriving today.

Very much along the lines of my own thinking is Edward S. Reisman's suggestion that we admit workers first on a temporary basis and then extend their stay if they show a willingness to assimilate. We differ on the details—I do not think, for example, that a judge should decide every case—but agree entirely about what is ultimately in the nation's best interest: to welcome and reward those newcomers who work, pay taxes, obey the law, learn English, and otherwise participate in American civic life.

On the question of Muslim immigrants, raised by both Seth Forman and Robert Lerner, obviously we need to give greater scrutiny to would-be immigrants from countries under the sway of radical Islam—and indeed many reforms implemented since September 11 are aimed at doing precisely that. But immigrants from Arabic-speaking countries constitute only an infinitesimal percentage of the annual influx—some ten thousand a year, according to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, out of a total of more than a million legal and illegal migrants—and it would be absurd to let that number become the tail that wags the dog of U.S. policy.

Philip Peters's point about refugee policy is well-taken but outside the scope of my article. As for Donald Feldstein's claim that anti-immigrant Americans of all eras have eventually been rendered irrelevant by the country's unique and astonishing power to assimi-

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IN THE CURRENT ISSUE OF *PARTISAN REVIEW*:

"What does the future hold for a Western world with a growing minority of fundamentalist Muslims? It was only after moving to Amsterdam that I found myself asking this question. It seemed to me a fair and important one. But it was, I found, a question that startlingly few writers had addressed."

– Bruce Bawer

And:

Walter Laqueur on Terrorism
Robert Wistrich on "Austrian Legacies"
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late newcomers of every color and creed, I hope and fully expect that this will prove true again in the decades that lie ahead.

Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

In his excellent article ["Israel's War," April], Efraim Karsh argues that a complete Israeli military victory over Palestinian terrorist organizations is a necessary first step toward achieving a durable peace in the Middle East. I agree, but we must also consider what Israel and the U.S. could do next to advance the situation.

Hopes that a moderate Palestinian leadership—one truly interested in peaceful coexistence with Israel—will emerge in the near future are misplaced. But such leadership might come from elsewhere. In the 1970's, some suggested that the Palestinian problem could be resolved by making part of the West Bank a province of Jordan and by returning Gaza to Egypt. I think it is high time to revive these ideas.

Both Egypt and Jordan have signed peace treaties with Israel, and for many years have received substantial amounts of money from the U.S. They should finally give back something useful in return, managing the territories and helping the Palestinians live with dignity, in a way that is acceptable to the Arab world. Neither country would want to be seen as absorbing the Palestinians—after all, they could have done that decades ago if they had so wished—but they could oversee the West Bank and Gaza until a moderate Palestinian leadership develops.

AARON SZAFER
Bellevue, Washington

TO THE EDITOR:

Efraim Karsh is right to call for the dismantling of Palestinian terrorist organizations, but he does not go nearly far enough. Israel should follow the example of the Civil War general William Tecumseh Sherman. In a letter spelling out his attitude in the fight against the Confederacy, Sherman wrote:

> If they want eternal war, well and good; we accept the issue and will dispossess them and put our friends in their places. . . . Three years ago, by a little reflection and patience, they could have had a hundred years of peace and prosperity, but they preferred war; very well. . . . Next year, their lands will be taken; for in war we can take them and rightfully too, and in another year they may beg vainly for their lives.

The Israelis traded land for peace and got swindled. They must now take back the land while imposing a severe punishment on the swindlers.

JAMES H. FINK
Lincoln, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

In his fine article, Efraim Karsh mentions Yasir Arafat's otherwise under-reported speech in a South African mosque, in which the Palestinian leader compared the Oslo accords, which he had just signed on the White House lawn, with the Treaty of Hudaibiya between Muhammad and the Quaraish tribe. Muhammad broke the treaty two years later and vanquished the Quaraish once and for all.

A few weeks after this speech was leaked to the press, I accompanied a group of Australian journalists visiting Israel to an exclusive interview with foreign minister Shimon Peres. They asked Peres for his reaction to Arafat's analogy. "Certainly, if we were to write his speeches for him, we would have written them differently," Peres intoned. "But, on the whole, we are satisfied."

Later that year, at the Oslo ceremony conferring upon him the Nobel Peace Prize he shared with Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, Peres said:

> I believe it is fitting that the prize has been awarded to Yasir Arafat. His quitting the path of confrontation in favor of the path of dialogue has opened the way to peace between ourselves and the Palestinian people, to whom we wish all the best in the future. . . . From my earliest youth, I have known that while obliged to plan with care the stages of our journey, we are entitled to dream, and keep dreaming, of its destination.

But rather than carefully planning the stages of the journey on which Israel was compelled to accompany him, Peres continued to dream as Arafat doubled the size of his "police" force, smuggled into his territories quantities and types of weaponry prohibited under the Oslo accords, and used his mosques, schools, and airwaves to incite a generation of Palestinians against peace.

Peres continues to dream today when he insists that a political solution can be divined that can reconcile an unredeemed Arafat with Israel's existence. His dream has become Israel's nightmare.

REUBEN ELIAZ
Beit Shemesh, Israel

EFRAIM KARSH writes:

I fully agree with James H. Fink that since Israel traded land for peace and got swindled, it should impose a severe punishment on the swindlers. There is probably no other region in today's world where the link between cause and effect has been so glaringly absent as in the Middle East, where the Arab political and intellectual elites, dominated as they are by a pervasive "victimization culture," have invariably refused to take responsibility for their own actions.

Nowhere has this state of mind been more evident than among Palestinians. Totally impervious to the overwhelming evidence that their tragedy has been largely self-inflicted, they have persistently viewed themselves as hapless victims of predatory Zionist and Israeli policies. This has in turn forestalled the possibility of a genuine Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation. To paraphrase General Sherman's astute observation as quoted by Mr. Fink, by means of a little reflection and patience the Palestinians could have had a hundred years of peace and prosperity, but preferred war.

Still, notwithstanding Palestinian intransigence, I find it difficult to accept Mr. Fink's suggestion that Israel take back the land surrendered to the Palestinian Authority. Not only might

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Bridging the Language Gap Between the Middle East and the West

THE ARAB MEDIA

On the United States:

Dr. 'Adel Sadeq, chairman of the Arab Psychiatrists Association and head of the Department of Psychiatry at 'Ein Shams University in Cairo, in an article in the Egyptian newspaper ***Hadith Al-Madina*** *on April 23, 2002:*

"Although you [President George W. Bush] invest a lot of effort in proving yourself, you are not successful in doing so because you are stupid and understand nothing about what is happening in the world.... Your stupidity is reflected in your facial features. Your face reminds me of the face of those who frequent a clinic for the mentally retarded.... I do not want to exaggerate by saying that your case is similar to cases I see at the clinic for the mentally retarded. But the truth is, without exaggeration, that your IQ is limited...."

On Suicide Bombers:

On April 11, 2002, following the March 27 Passover suicide bombing in Netanya that killed 29 people, Dr. Khalil Ibrahim Al-Sa'adat, a columnist for the Saudi government daily ***Al-Jazirah*** *wrote:*

"May Allah have mercy on you, oh 'Abd Al-Baset 'Oudeh [the suicide bomber], mujaheed and martyr, the quiet hero who infiltrated so elegantly and spoke so gaily. You defended your religion, your homeland, and your people.... Courageously, full of willingness to [wage] Jihad, and with faith filling your heart, you executed your assignment and sacrificed your pure soul for your religion and your homeland.... Despite all the obstacles, fortifications, and security measures, you reached [the appointed place], sat down at one of the tables, talked, told a few jokes, and laughed with them, and then Allah decreed for you a martyr's death. What heroism, courage, and strength—almost unmatched on the face of the earth!"

On Jews:

Dr. Umayma Ahmad Al-Jalahma of King Faysal University in Al-Dammam, in the Saudi government daily ***Al-Riyadh*** *on March 10, 2002:*

"The holiday of Purim has some dangerous customs that will, no doubt, horrify you.... I would like to tell you how human blood is spilled so it can be used for their holiday pastries.... The victim's blood drips from him very slowly.... The Jews take the spilled blood, in the bottle set in the bottom [of the needle-studded barrel], and the Jewish cleric makes his coreligionists completely happy when he serves them the pastries in which human blood is mixed.... This blood is very carefully collected by the 'rabbi,' the Jewish cleric, the chef who specializes in preparing these kinds of pastries."

Fatma Abdallah Mahmoud, columnist for the Egyptian government daily ***Al-Akhbar*** *on April 29, 2002:*

"Thus the Jews are accursed—the Jews of our time, those who preceded them and those who will come after them, if any Jews come after them. With regard to the fraud of the Holocaust ... I, personally, complain to Hitler, from the bottom of my heart, 'If only you had done it, brother, if only it had really happened, so that the world could sigh in relief [without] the Jews' evil and sin.'"

On Reform in the Arab and Muslim World:

Abd Al-Hamid, dean of the faculty of Islamic Law at the University of Qatar, in the Arabic London-based daily ***Al-Hayat*** *on November 29, 2001:*

"Do the satellite channels have the right to broadcast terrorist opinions and incitement on the pretext of the principle of freedom for all, disseminating hatred in the [hearts of] the viewers, who then [carry out] harmful acts of stupidity? Or must the regime intervene and set limits on irresponsible freedoms? There is a big difference between granting freedom of speech for people who have opposing political opinions [and express them] peacefully ... and between leaving the microphones to [be used by] armed groups that commit murder to advance their ideas.... We must examine our curriculum, and evaluate our educational methods. We must reexamine our education and our media. This will be the right beginning for the fight against the culture of terrorism."

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such a move prove well beyond Israel's political and diplomatic reach, but it is likely to be counterproductive. In withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and some 40 percent of the West Bank, Israel for all intents and purposes ended its rule over the Arab population there, which subsequently came under the domination of the Palestinian Authority. Any reoccupation of these territories, as opposed to their temporary seizure for military purposes, would bring that population back under Israel's control, hardly a welcome development.

Nor do I agree with Aaron Szafer's proposed return of the West Bank and Gaza to their former occupiers, respectively Jordan and Egypt. Unlike Jordan, which in April 1950 annexed those parts of Judea and Samaria that came to be known as the West Bank, Egypt never staked a claim to the Gaza Strip prior to the 1967 war, and showed no inclination to do so in its aftermath. At the time of the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement in 1978, it was generally thought that Anwar Sadat had *rejected* Menachem Begin's offer to return Gaza to Egypt.

As for Jordan, King Hussein, while initially keen to regain the West Bank for his kingdom, was always too timid to pay the price by becoming the first Arab leader to make peace with Israel. With his 1974 designation of the PLO as the "sole representative of the Palestinian people," he avoided putting himself on a collision course with the rest of the Arab world. Publicly endorsing while privately dreading Palestinian self-determination, Hussein increasingly came to view Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank as the least of all evils and the most effective barrier to a Palestinian state. Hence the secret Jordanian remonstration to Israel when Ehud Barak indicated his readiness in 2000 to surrender the Jordan Valley to Palestinian control as part of a comprehensive peace settlement.

All this leaves the local population of the West Bank and Gaza as Israel's only conceivable partner for peace—*not* the PLO, which has proved its unwillingness to transcend its terrorist origins or its attendant commitment to Israel's destruction, and certainly not the Palestinian diaspora, which has been brainwashed for decades to view the "right of return" to pre-1967 Israel as the only viable solution to its plight.

That the architects of Oslo stubbornly refused to recognize this reality, even after their "peace process" degenerated into the worst war in Israel's history, is a sad testament not only to their infinite capacity for self-delusion but also to their paternalistic and condescending attitude toward their Arab partners. One need only read Shimon Peres's incredible response, aptly provided above by Reuben Eliaz, to Arafat's candid admission of the deception behind the Oslo accords to realize how deep this tendency runs—and what it has cost the state of Israel.

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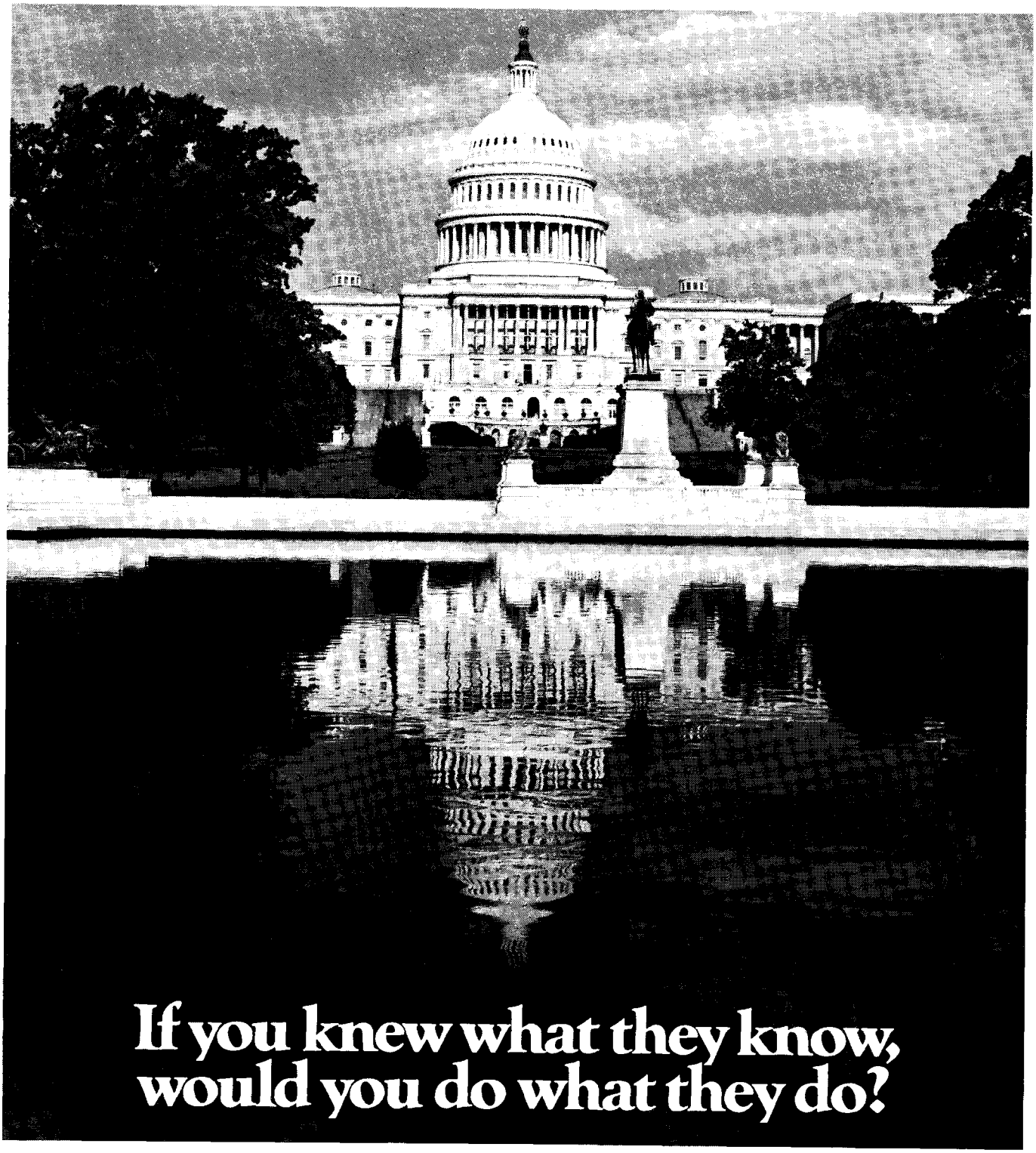

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Commentary
July-August 2002

Our Enemies, the Saudis

Victor Davis Hanson

EVEN IF we were not attempting to prosecute a war against terror, the time would have long since arrived to reconsider our relations with Saudi Arabia. That the Saudis, of all people, should now be regarded as a virtual ally in this conflict only underscores the need at last to settle matters between us. Although the catalog of disagreements on our agenda is long, and many of the items are by now familiar, it is helpful to review the list.

BY ANY modern standard of civilization, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a bizarre place. In an age of spreading consensual government, the House of Saud resembles an Ottoman sultanate staffed by some 7,000 privileged royal cousins. The more favored are ensconced in plush multi-million dollar palaces and maintain luxury estates abroad in Paris, Geneva, Marbella, and Aspen. All 7,000 haggle over the key military and political offices of the kingdom—normally distributed not on the appeal of proven merit but more often through a mixture of blood ties, intrigue, and bribes.

Polygamy is legal, and practiced, among the Saudi elite. Everywhere in the kingdom, women are veiled, secluded, and subject to the harsh protocols of a sexual apartheid. A few female Saudi professionals who in 1991 drove cars as a sign of protest mostly ended up arrested and jailed. Women who have traveled to the West remain under the constant surveillance of the Committee for the Advancement of Virtue and Elimination of Sin, a Taliban-like government watchdog group of clerics and whip-bearing fanatics.

There is no religious tolerance in Saudi Arabia for creeds other than Islam; in our State Department's own muted nomenclature, "Freedom of religion does not exist" there. The Wahhabi strain of fundamentalist Islam—over 30,000 mosques and growing—is prone to occasionally violent spasms. The Saudi constitution is defined officially by governmental decree as the Qur'an, and the legal system is the domain of clerics who adjudicate by an array of medieval codes and punishments. Presently the UN Committee Against Torture is asking the Saudis to curtail flogging and amputations; so far, they have answered that such punishments have been an integral part of Islamic law "for 1,400 years" and so simply "cannot be changed."

Although Westernized Saudis in suits and ties, often personable, with impeccable English and an array of American friends, are ubiquitous on our air waves, they are mere darting phantoms of a free press. Dozens of state-run papers and private but publicly subsidized media vent the most virulent anti-Semitic hatred in the Arab world—fundamentalist screeds or "poetry" equating Jews with monkeys and calling for their extermination. Editors are free only in the sense that they can draw on

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their own creativity in expressing real dislike for the United States and Israel, perhaps to be rebuked on the rare occasions when such venom is made known to the very deferential American media elite who interview the royals on our evening television shows. The Saudi Press Agency is as careful in monitoring news accounts as informers are in observing classrooms or as clerics in scrutinizing cultural events for the presence of women.

Criticism of the royal family, Saudi government, and religious leaders is legally forbidden and strictly monitored. The few dissident writers in the kingdom are jailed, blacklisted, and sometimes have their books banned and driven off the Arab-language market. The names of the censoring ministries—Supreme Information Council, Press Information Council, Ministry of Information, Directorate of Publications—come right out of Orwell's *1984*.

AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, the world is slowly learning how the Saudi princes have pulled off their grafting of a high-tech cultivar onto medieval roots. It has been accomplished through bribes to clerics, cash to terrorists, welfare to the commons, and largesse to prominent Americans: money in some form to any and all who find the House of Saud either too modern or too backward. Such inducements have been indispensable because the vast wealth that Western petroleum companies developed for the royal family, plus the tourist treasures of Mecca and Medina, brought neither a stable economy nor general prosperity. The kingdom's accidental boon was not invested broadly in viable industries, secular education, or political reform, but instead lavished on ill-conceived projects and a royal elite who consumed too much of it on luxury cars, houses, clothes, jewels, gambling, and trips abroad—sins against both Islam and Western laws of economic development.

But now the Saudis are $200 billion in debt. The population is soaring. The imams are worried more about unrest than about their stipends. Thirty percent of Saudis remain unschooled, and nearly as many are barely literate, their resentment against a coddled elite mitigated only by carefully measured doses of anti-Western Wahhabism and the satisfaction that at least the millions of guest Asian and Arab helots, imported for much of the society's wage labor, are more unfree than they. Efforts at creating viable irrigated agriculture and petrochemical industries have had but mixed success—and then only thanks to massive infusions of oil-dollar subsidies.

It is not just human capital that is bought from abroad. Almost every item deemed important to the modernization of the kingdom—from drilling bits and heavy machinery to the phone system and power grid—is shipped in. The expertise to use, repair, and improve such critical appurtenances rests either with foreigners or with the few thousand Saudis trained abroad.

The Saudi royals are thus these days an increasingly troubled bunch. They are quite understandably exasperated that they have failed to earn needed capital by developing nonpetroleum industries, and that their citizenry lacks either the practical skills to create thriving commercial enterprises or the individual drive and initiative to build businesses from the ground up. They are even more irked that their imported gadgets have brought with them hostile ideas, critical lectures, and unwelcome advice, as if air-conditioners and neurosurgeons should come without consequences and as freely as oil out of the desert. And they are still more dyspeptic that some people persist in thinking there is something unhealthy in the fact that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers on September 11 were Saudi nationals.

IT IS common to hear that Osama bin Laden, a naturalized Saudi Arabian whose family still has close ties to the inner circles of the monarchy, deliberately chose Saudi nationals for the September 11 murders in order to poison the otherwise amicable relations between the kingdom and the United States.

Maybe so—but the gambit, if that is what it was, was certainly made easier by the thousands of Saudis who willingly traveled to Afghanistan over the last few years to train in bin Laden's terrorist camps. Royal denials notwithstanding, Saudi government money has for years been funneled into madrassas to encourage radical anti-Americanism as well as to fund the al Qaeda terrorists. Allegedly the purpose has been as much to provide insurance against subversive activity directed at the kingdom itself as to subsidize attacks on the United States. And there may be, after all, a sick genius in a system that can shift the hatreds of an illiterate Saudi youth away from the jet-setting sheiks who have diverted his nation's treasure and onto the anonymous Americans who created that wealth, who ship the kingdom its consumer goods, and who defend it from the neighborhood's carnivores.

But that anomaly raises the key question: why *have* close relations with the Saudis been a cornerstone of American foreign policy for decades, as brought to our attention most recently in a series

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of slick Saudi-financed ads showing American Presidents from Franklin Roosevelt to George W. Bush in warm embraces with a variety of sheiks? The answer is banal: oil, and nothing more. Otherwise, Saudi Arabia's small population of 22 million would earn it less clout than Egypt. Otherwise, the kingdom is no more strategically located than nearby Yemen. Otherwise, its sponsorship of terrorism would ensure it a place on the State Department's list of rogue states like Syria and Iran. In fact, a more sinister status: Saudi terrorists have killed more Americans than all those murdered by Iranians, Syrians, Libyans, and Iraqis put together.

The actual Saudi percentage of the world's crude oil and gas reserves is a matter of dispute. On the one hand, there are still unexplored vastnesses in the kingdom itself; on the other, there is an indeterminable amount of oil lying beneath Russia, West Africa, the Arctic, and the seas. But it is reasonable to suppose that Saudi Arabia holds 25 percent or more of the remaining petroleum now known to exist. Thus, for at least the next two decades, the kingdom's oil is thought to be critical to the world economy and in particular to the prosperity of Japan, Europe, and the United States.

In the past, our devil's bargain with the kingdom was as utilitarian as it was unapologetic. They kept pumping the oil—either to us directly or as untraceable currents into the huge world pool—and we promised to ignore both the primeval nature of their domestic society and their virulent hatred of Israel. In the cold war the geopolitics of containing an expansionist Soviet Union made this mutually beneficial concordat easier to stomach. There was also a certain familiarity bred by the growing multitude of Americans who traveled to Saudi Arabia to construct the civilized veneer of the kingdom and of Saudis who came here to obtain the expertise that would presumably ensure some kind of future autonomy. Perhaps the idealistic among us once thought that their intimate and sustained exposure to Americans might eventually lead to liberalization.

Even after the cold war, however, "stability," rather than autonomy or liberalization, was the operative word when it came to our interest in Saudi Arabia. In theory, we did not press the royal family for democratic reform on their assurances that something far worse and far more radical—à la Algeria or Iran—might come to power in the chaos of elections. This seemed fair enough; who wanted another Khomeini or Mullah Omar atop a quarter of the world's oil supply? Or, worse, a Hitler-like thug who would hold one election and one alone? So we both shrugged as the Saudis permitted our troops to defend them, our experts to train them, and our merchants to profit from their oil while they, for their part, managed to hold their noses at our liberated women, prominent Jews, and crass dissemination of videos, fast food, raucous music, and general cultural wantonness.

Marshall Wyllie, a former chargé at the embassy in Saudi Arabia, once summed up the American policy best: "We need their oil, and they need our protection." Armed to the teeth with American weaponry that for the most part they are unable to maintain or operate competently,* bolstered by a frontline tripwire of uniformed American soldiers, and static in their resistance to change, the Saudis preened that they were the reliable deliverymen of inexpensive and plentiful oil in a way that the lunocracies in Iraq, Iran, or Libya were not. And admittedly there was something to that claim, at least enough to enable us to think that our policy toward them was neither illogical nor even inherently amoral.

Saudi princes did tend to choose predetermined successors when the ruling sheik of the day passed on, without the gunplay typically seen in succession fights elsewhere in the Arab world. Unlike the Iraqis, they never torched the oil fields; unlike the Iranians, they never stormed our embassy for hostages; unlike the Libyans, they never bombed our airliners. But as if in imitation of their own perspective on reality, our approach to *them* has also been static and equally blinkered, and in particular has taken no account of the huge alterations in the post-cold-war world.

These changes were already in play well before September 11. The international oil matrix is far more complex than during the Gulf war even a decade ago. Russia is now rapidly becoming the world's most important producer, and the demise of the Soviet bloc has meant that the entire world is now under active exploration. Whereas most other nations are no longer overly worried about the politics of oil exportation, and are positively indifferent to the old Marxist rhetoric about Western capitalist exploitation, the petroleum policy of

* Saudi weapons are impressive, since 40 percent of the country's income is devoted to buying imported arms. But their pilots, their high command, and their men in the field have no record of distinction in modern modes of warfare. In the past, most of their expensive AWACS surveillance planes had to be either manned by mercenaries or stay grounded. The billions of dollars' worth of ultra-sophisticated jets, helicopters, and bombers simply lack qualified pilots to fly them, much less adequate mechanics to fix them. Those who do fight are hardly inspiring: had Saddam Hussein kept his tanks moving through Kuwait in the summer of 1991, he could have swallowed the kingdom in a few days well before we arrived to save it.

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Saudi Arabia—which has threatened or implemented at least three embargoes in past decades—remains both entirely self-interested and never far from the radical interests in the Middle East.

The sheiks, however, are being led by events that are rapidly careering out of their control. If Saudi Arabia pumps less oil, there will be shocks and disruptions, but eager new producing countries will soon fill the void; if the Saudis export more, then the price may well collapse altogether. And because new, nonpetroleum-based technologies are on the horizon, both to produce electricity and to power transportation, not to mention the increased efficiency promised in the near future by hybrid engines, most exporting countries now worry about getting what oil they have out of the ground rather than watch it sit untapped and decline in value in the latter half of the century.

In sum, a Saudi Arabia with a sizable debt and no real nonpetroleum economy needs consumers as much as, or more than, buyers need Middle Eastern producers. Saudi Arabia is ever so slowly losing its vaunted place as the world's price-fixer, and its past history and present machinations reveal it to be no more or less a friend of the United States than any other Islamic exporting country. If the Saudis declared another embargo, it might fare about as well as Saddam Hussein's recent ban of exports to the United States—and cause a surge in pumping and exploration from Russia and South America.

THERE IS, then, no real need for us to be frightened by the loss of the kingdom's oil friendship. But we should be concerned by the evidence of its strategic enmity. It may be true that the Saudis are neither Iraqis nor Iranians nor Libyans; but it is quite dangerous enough that they are Saudis.

The PLO archives made public by the Israeli army in the wake of its recent operations on the West Bank have confirmed that the kingdom actively gives cash to a variety of terrorist organizations and showers with money (or free trips to Mecca) the families of suicide bombers. This bounty can no longer be seen as mere postmortem charity, but rather as premeditated financial incentives for murder. What that means is that the kingdom's suicide-killers of September 11 who butchered our civilians were not so at odds with basic Saudi approaches to conflict after all.

The much-vaunted Saudi "peace plan" for the Middle East does not alter this troubling picture. What was striking (stunning, really) about the proposals was not the grudging willingness after a half-century to recognize the existence of the state of Israel but the complete absence in them of any gesture—planned state visits to Tel Aviv, direct talks with Jerusalem, cessation of state propaganda, curtailment of terrorist subsidies—that might suggest more than a public-relations ploy to deflect growing American furor after September 11. Current Saudi peace-feelers are mostly explicable as salve for wounds the Saudis themselves have inflicted, and which they are suddenly worried have become infected in a very aggrieved host.

Then there is radical Islam. Despite suicide bombings in Lebanon, the first World Trade Center attack, the 1996 assaults against the Khobar Towers complex in Saudi Arabia, the 1998 bombings at the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the hole blasted in the *USS Cole*, distracted Americans used to believe that such vicious wasps deserved little more than an occasional swat. But after the murder of 3,000 Americans, and the various anthrax, dirty-bomb, and suicide-attack scares, Americans are finally seeing militant Islam not merely as a different religion, or even as a radical Jim-Jones-like cult, but as a threat to our very existence.

Saudi Arabia is the placenta of this frightening phenomenon. Its money has financed it; its native terrorists promote it; and its own unhappy citizenry is either amused by or indifferent to its effects upon the world. Surely it has occurred to more than a few Americans that, without a petroleum-rich Wahhabism, the support for such international killers and the considerable degree of ongoing aid to those who would destroy the West would radically diminish.

Finally, Saudi Arabia has shown an increasingly disturbing tendency to interfere in the domestic affairs of the United States, both in religious and political matters. Whereas our female soldiers, who are in the Arabian desert to preserve the power of the sheiks, cannot walk about unveiled, their hosts show no such cultural inhibitions when here in America. Right after September 11, the FBI was asked by the monarchy to help whisk away members of the bin Laden family from the Boston area to find sanctuary back home. Any government that can request—and promptly receive—federal help for the family of a terrorist, whose operatives, 75 percent of them Saudis, had hours earlier vaporized 3,000 American civilians, has too much confidence in its clout with the United States government.

Saudi television commercials seeking to influence American public opinion are now nightly fare. Thousands of Saudi students are politically active on American campuses. Local imams reflect the

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extreme and often anti-American views of senior Muslim clerics who channel the biggest subsidies from the Middle East. Saudi Arabia's cash infusions to Muslim communities in America ensure that Wahhabi fundamentalism takes hold among Arab guests living in the United States. As Daniel Pipes has tirelessly documented in these pages, the danger to us now is not just without but within, and its ultimate address is, more often than not, Riyadh.

To recapitulate, all the old reasons that prevented us from breaking away from Saudi Arabia are no longer compelling. More and more, the royals' oil policy is neither pro-Western nor so crucial as it once was in determining world pricing. The present government has been an active abettor of terror, and perhaps the most virulent anti-Israeli Arab country in the region. Al Qaeda and other terrorists have received bribe money from the Saudis, without which they could not operate so effectively. That the monarchy has not been forthcoming in tracking those with ties to the September 11 murderers reflects its real worry about where such investigations might lead. And Saudi cash has been a force for radicalism right here in the United States, casting into doubt the legitimacy and purpose of almost every Islamic charity now operating within our borders. Nor should we forget that no country in the world is more hostile to the American idea of religious tolerance, free speech, constitutional government, and sexual equality.

Can the U.S., then, revamp its policy toward Saudi Arabia, perhaps to conform with our stance toward similarly belligerent regimes like Libya or Syria? The beginning of wisdom is to acknowledge that such an about-face would hardly be easy—if for no other reason than that many of the royal family are close friends of powerful Americans in the oil and defense industries, on university campuses, and within government. Their pedigree stretches back to the likes of Clark Clifford, Spiro Agnew, and Richard Helms in the days when ARAMCO used to lobby to prevent American networks from broadcasting such delicacies as the 1979 film *Death of a Princess* (a surreal chronicle of the public execution of a royal Saudi princess and the beheading of her lover on charges of fornication).

Moreover, most elite Saudis here in America are longtime residents, generous hosts, and superficially friendly. They tend to be adept at American-style public relations, whether emerging in coats and ties for interviews, receptions, and political galas or time-traveling back to the ancient netherworld of flowing robes and headdress when negotiations toughen. The few American journalists who bring up the sordid side of Saudi behavior usually appear gratuitously rude to guests who come across as sensitive, hurt, and in full denial.

But the point in any attempt to change our relationship is not so much to punish the Saudis for past hostility and duplicity as to create a landscape for real revolution in the Middle East—a reordering that might in its turn prevent a future clash of civilizations. Such an attempt must be made with no illusions that we have any real control over distant events, and with full recognition of the impracticability of growing democracy in a culture without the soil of tolerance or a middle class. *Are* there Saudi dissidents who are committed to democracy and can stand up to Wahhabi madness? Our task is to find them, or help to create them, and then to aid them all.

This will sound like a mission impossible, but consider: American businessmen may find the royal family hospitable (over $300 billion in arms sales since the 1991 Gulf war), but most foreign workers in the kingdom mistrust their employers; most Arabs elsewhere resent the abject corruption and conspicuous consumption of the House of Saud; and most Saudis themselves would be happy to see the pampered princes go—some, admittedly, in exchange for Islamist clerics, but others for any consensual government that could end the present kleptocracy. Besides, while we were pursuing this long-term goal, there are steps that could and should be taken in the meantime.

One of them is to recalibrate our oil policy, encouraging—with loans, joint pipeline ventures, and long-term contracts—exploration in Russia and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. Not only would such suppliers increase the pool of the world's oil and gas, and thereby lessen Saudi influence, but at least in the case of Russia we would be buying from a struggling democracy rather than from a small elite already as rich as many of its own silenced people are poor. And, speaking of energy, there are things to be done on the home front as well: conservatives might withhold their opposition to government-mandated efficiency standards for new cars and trucks, liberals their opposition to Arctic oil drilling.

Another interim but absolutely crucial step is the seemingly peripheral matter of dealing with Iraq. In a world where our enemies are perfectly prepared to blow up our buildings and murder our civilians at work, we can no longer tolerate the continuance of a mad regime with access to poison

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gas and potential nukes. Iraq is significant, moreover, not just for the evil that it is today but for the good that it might represent tomorrow. Once freed from Saddam Hussein, its rather prosperous and secular people could help change the moral balance of the Middle East, immediately posing a challenge to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the other Gulf states. Not only would a liberated Iraq become a friendly oil producer, but its very existence would raise a host of fruitfully embarrassing questions about such matters as why there need be American troops in Saudi Arabia at all, and against whom those troops are defending the sheiks if not their own people.

WHAT THE United States should strive for in the Middle East is *not* tired normality—the sclerosis that led to September 11, the Palestinian quagmire, and an Iraq full of weapons of mass destruction. Insisting on adherence to the same old relationship is akin to supporting a tottering Soviet Gorbachev instead of an emerging Russian Yeltsin, or lamenting the bold new world ushered in by the fall of the Berlin Wall—a radical upheaval that critics once said was too abrupt and perilous given the decades of dehumanizing Soviet tyranny, the inexperience of East European dissidents, and the absence of a Westernized middle class. Wiser observers have long argued that where governments hate us most, the people tend to like us more, sensing that we at least oppose those who bring them misery.

Only by seeking to spark disequilibrium, if not outright chaos, do we stand a chance of ridding the world of the likes of bin Laden, Arafat, and Saddam Hussein. Just as a reconstituted Afghanistan eliminated the satanic Taliban and turned the region's worst regime into a government with real potential, so too a new Iraq might start the fall of dominoes in the Gulf that could wipe away the entire foul nest behind September 11.

Even should fundamental changes go wrong in Saudi Arabia, the worst that could happen would not be much worse than what we have now—thousands of our citizens dead, a crater in New York, millions put out of work, Israelis blown up weekly, and a half-billion people in the Arab world unfree, hungry, illiterate, and informed by the perpetrators of evil that America and Israel are at fault. As a student said to me shortly after September 11, "What are we afraid of? Are they going to blow up the World Trade Center with thousands in it?"

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The UN on the Loose

Joshua Muravchik

THIS SPRING, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights held its 58th annual meeting, the month-long event at which it conducts all of its business. For the first time ever, the United States did not participate. The effects were evident.

Although fewer than one-third of the UN's members sit on the human-rights commission at any one time, the U.S. had secured election to every session since the commission's founding. Not only was the commission something of an American invention—Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the committee that conceived it—but the U.S., as the mightiest power of the postwar era, has put human rights at the forefront of its foreign policy. Other states have allowed the U.S. to stake its special claim to the commission precisely because they have not attached as much importance to the issue—and also because the commission is essentially toothless. With a warrant only to hear grievances and spotlight abuses, it can neither punish violators nor compensate victims.

This is not to say that the human-rights commission stands for nothing. In its combination of powerlessness and presumed moral authority, it is a perfect microcosm of the UN itself. It epitomizes the idea, central to the world organization's premises, that the Hobbesian chaos of international relations can be superseded by a "community of nations," governed by principle and sharing important common values. This year's unprecedented session of the human-rights commission, without the U.S. in attendance to wield its traditional influence, did indeed reflect certain principles and values—though not, alas, the ones to be found in the lofty language of the UN charter.

MEMBERS OF the human-rights commission are elected by the UN Economic and Social Council. To be eligible, a country must first be nominated by its region. Ordinarily, this ensures that there is no competition in the final balloting, since each region is assigned a certain number of seats and usually nominates just enough countries to fill them.

In last year's vote for the 2002 session, however, the "Western Europe and Others" group, to which the U.S. belongs, declined to play by the usual rules. France, Austria, and Sweden laid claim to the three seats to which the region was entitled. Since none of them would agree to defer to the U.S., the Economic and Social Council was left to choose from a slate of four. When the secret ballots were counted, the U.S., despite having received enough informal pledges of support to ensure election, was the odd man out.

Behind this rebuff lay a tacit alliance between America's allies and its adversaries. For the Europeans who orchestrated the ouster of the U.S., the point was to teach a lesson to the Bush administra-

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tion, which in the months before September 11 was already being subjected to a tide of trans-Atlantic complaints about American "unilateralism" in connection with its refusal to endorse efforts like the Kyoto Protocols and the International Criminal Court. But the Europeans were also able to count on the support of many of the world's nastiest regimes. Cuba and China, frequent targets of American censure on the commission, lobbied especially hard to deprive the U.S. of its seat. In the wake of the vote, the Chinese ambassador told the *Washington Post* that "We prefer to have dialogue [on human rights]. The United States does not," while nearby the French ambassador was telling the *New York Times* that "approaching human-rights issues with cooperation and dialogue rather than confrontation . . . worked well with China."

WHEN THE 2002 meeting finally took place in Geneva this past March and April, the absence of the U.S. was in some respects not especially noticeable. Of the 110 resolutions adopted by the commission, 80 percent were general declarations rather than statements about problems in particular countries, and most echoed familiar tropes in the famously overblown rhetoric of the UN.

The rights asserted in these general declarations ranged far and wide and took into account a potpourri of sufferers: from migrants, missing persons, juvenile offenders, conscientious objectors, and people with HIV/AIDS to more familiar victims, indigenous peoples, and the "African diaspora." A number of resolutions addressed the rights of women, aiming to protect them from violence, slavery, and prostitution as well as to ensure a place for them in "the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building." Poor countries also received lavish attention. Not only was the now canonical "right to development" affirmed, but so too was a newer litany including the right "to establish cultural industries that [are] viable and competitive at national and international levels"; the right to "sound management of unwanted stocks of hazardous wastes"; and, naturally, the right to debt relief and more foreign aid.

The U.S. has never stood in the way of such resolutions. Even had it wished to do so, it has held back, saving its political capital for bigger fights: namely, the singling out of individual offenders. And that is exactly where the 2002 session of the human-rights commission most clearly demonstrated what the world "community" would look like without American leadership—or American damage-control.

Governments that routinely violate human rights have learned that membership in the commission is a good way to insulate themselves from criticism. Cuba, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Syria—five of the ten countries rated the "worst of the worst" in Freedom House's annual survey of political rights and civil liberties—now sit on the commission. China and Russia are also members, although they rule, respectively, Tibet and Chechnya, designated by Freedom House as the least free of the world's various nonsovereign territories.

What happens when such foxes guard the hen house? Not a word was said by the commission about Libya, Syria, or Saudi Arabia—not even about their treatment of women, which, needless to say, falls considerably short of the commission's feminism-inspired standards. Nor was mention made of most of the countries scoring a "near-worst" on Freedom House's scale, including Vietnam, Laos, Uzbekistan, Rwanda, Eritrea, and Bhutan.

China—the most prominent member of this second list—wields enough diplomatic clout, and deploys it with sufficient ferocity, that it is has *never* been criticized by the human-rights commission. Indeed, it has almost always succeeded in blocking critical resolutions even from being debated. What it has not managed to do is to keep them from being introduced in the first place—a duty invariably performed, in previous sessions, by the United States. This year, however, for the first time in memory, China did not need to use its blocking tactics. Nobody, including none of the European members of the commission, was willing to beard Beijing. (Nor was there a hint of "dialogue" on the subject.)

This is not to say that *no* rights-abusing nation suffered censure. Fourteen did—almost as many as in previous years—but the criticisms tended to be fairly tepid. The mildest of the resolutions "invited" the government of Cuba, whose "efforts to give effect to the social rights of the population despite an adverse international environment are to be recognized, to make efforts to achieve similar progress in respect of human, civil, and political rights." Even this, introduced by several Latin American states, infuriated Fidel Castro, who in the absence of the U.S. had expected to get away with no mention at all.

Nor was the European Union completely mute about violators. It endorsed resolutions critical of abuses in Zimbabwe, Iraq, Iran, Myanmar, Sudan, Congo, and Chechnya. Three of these, however, failed to pass. Although President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe had orchestrated a wave of racist violence in his campaign to cling to power, the African bloc, taking a page from China's book, pushed through a motion that prevented the Zimbabwe resolution from coming to the floor.

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The Islamic states, for their part, joined together to defeat the motion on Iran, even though most observers agree that human-rights violations there have worsened in the last year. The decision was trumpeted on Teheran's state-run television:

> [T]he human-rights commission's decision not to condemn Iran, which is unprecedented since eighteen years ago . . . was made at a time when America was not a member of the commission. This is a very important and decisive development because in America's absence, members of the international community and official UN institutions are no longer influenced by America, and they can make fair decisions.

Unexpectedly, Russia also received help from the Islamic nations. Although Russia's forces in Chechnya are estimated to have caused the deaths of some 60,000 Muslim civilians, the Islamic caucus abstained from and thereby scuttled a resolution of condemnation. The caucus needed Russia's vote and influence, and had bigger fish to fry—namely, Israel and the American war on terrorism.

A FREQUENT refrain of the 2002 meeting was that since September 11, efforts to combat terrorism had been creating new threats to human rights. The theme was sounded first by Mary Robinson, the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, who opened the session by deploring the "sharp rise in Islamophobia, anti-Arab and anti-Semitic expression." Secretary General Kofi Annan chimed in, warning that to fight terrorism by sacrificing human rights "would hand the terrorists a victory beyond their dreams." Accordingly, the commission adopted a resolution warning those states engaged in the "struggle against terrorism" not to discriminate "on grounds of race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin" and to "refrain from all forms of racial profiling."

But this tea was too weak for the Islamic caucus, which pushed through another resolution sounding "alarm . . . at the impact of September 11 on Muslim minorities and communities." Decrying a "campaign of defamation," it complained that "Islam is frequently and wrongly associated with human-rights violations and with terrorism" and reminded one and all that "discrimination against human beings on grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity." These high-minded sentiments were endorsed by, among others, Syria, whose president declared last May in the presence of the Pope that the Jews have tried "to kill the principles of all religions with the same mentality with which they betrayed Jesus Christ," and by Saudi Arabia, which forbids the open practice of any faith other than Islam and where an official of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs recently expressed his "surprise . . . that the Christian U.S. allows the 'brothers of apes and pigs' [Jews] to corrupt it."

None of the resolution's supporters explained why the commission should deplore attacks on Muslims in particular at a time when, in Europe, synagogues were being burned, Jewish cemeteries vandalized, and Jews assaulted on a daily basis—almost always by Muslim immigrants. Nor did they say why it was erroneous to associate Islam with terrorism and human-rights violations when about two-thirds of the terrorist groups named in the State Department's annual report on the subject are Islamic and when the world's predominantly Muslim states cluster together at the bottom of Freedom House's survey of civil and political liberty.

BUT THE hypocrisy in the commission's concerns about "defamation" of the Islamic world were as nothing compared to its treatment of Israel. While most states guilty of human-rights abuses went entirely unmentioned at the meeting, and the unlucky few who did not escape scrutiny were criticized in single statements, Israel was lambasted in eight separate resolutions, and in language far harsher than that applied to any other state.

The Islamic caucus and the remaining Communist states (China, Cuba, Vietnam, and North Korea) instigated these attacks, but the lynch-mob spirit was very much encouraged by Kofi Annan and Mary Robinson. Referring to Israel's then-ongoing military operation to root out the terrorist infrastructure in the West Bank, Annan proclaimed that the UN could not "afford to be neutral in the face of great moral challenges," adding that "the desperate situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories . . . has become an affront to the conscience of mankind." Robinson trumpeted her readiness to lead a delegation to investigate alleged Israeli war crimes, and when Israel refused to give visas to her group, she issued her report anyway, condemning Palestinian suicide bombings in a brief aside before devoting thousands of words to castigating Israel.

As for the resolutions themselves, one condemned Israel for its occupation of the Golan Heights, another for its detention of Lebanese terrorists, a third for its settlements in the territories, and a fourth and fifth for its failure to cooperate with Mary Robinson's investigation. Three more addressed general concerns about human rights in "occupied Palestine." One of these, which passed by a vote of 52 to one—with only Guatemala, Israel's

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sole defender on the commission, dissenting—asserted "the unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination"; "unqualified" means regardless of their willingness to live in peace with Israel.

The coup de grace of the anti-Israel resolutions "affirmed the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to resist the Israeli occupation," adding that "by so doing, the Palestinian people is fulfilling . . . one of the goals and purposes of the United Nations." To dispel any doubt about the import of the term "resist," the resolution invoked the authority of General Assembly Resolution 37/43 of December 3, 1982. Opposed at the time by both the U.S. and the Europeans, this proclaims "the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples against foreign occupation by *all available means, including armed struggle*" (emphasis added). As everyone understood then and now, the last six words mean terrorism.

This blatant sanction of terrorism was approved by a vote of 40 to five, with seven abstentions. Two of the nine EU members of the commission, Britain and Germany, voted against the resolution, as did Canada, Guatemala, and the Czech Republic. One, Italy, was among the abstainers, as were Japan and Poland. The other six EU members—France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and Austria—voted for it. That they understood full well what they had endorsed was made clear by the fact that each of the six lamely took the floor to explain, or rather to extenuate, its vote. (The representative of Sweden, one of Israel's most vitriolic detractors, said that "his country supported the resolution without joy"; Belgium's delegate "said the resolution could be seen as a call for peace . . . despite some unfortunate wording"; and so forth.)

All in all, the commission's resolutions, reports, and speeches on the situation in the Middle East absorbed more than half its time. As a result, consideration of every other item on its agenda was severely curtailed. The commission's "special rapporteurs"—investigators whom it employs to bring particular abuses to light—were reduced to five minutes each to present their findings. Ten of them even staged a quasi-strike in protest. But to no avail.

ONLY DAYS after the commission adjourned, new elections were held for 2003, and the United States regained its seat. Even the liberal human-rights activists who rarely tire of reciting what they perceive to be America's failures were eager to see it back. So were the Europeans, who this time reserved an uncontested seat for the U.S.

It would be comforting to report that America's return will put right everything that was wrong in the last session. But in truth, 2002 was different from other years only in degree. Previous sessions have seen Iran and Russia criticized, but never Syria or Saudi Arabia; Cuba has been chastised, but each year less strongly; the Chinese have had to suffer the introduction of disapproving resolutions, but never their passage; Israel has managed to get by with just four or five blatantly unfair condemnations, rather than the eight of this meeting. What distinguished this year's proceedings was not the absence of any genuine concern for human rights but only the new extremes to which the regnant hypocrisy was taken.

In theory, the states serving on the UN's human-rights commission are supposed to put principles of international justice ahead of their selfish interests. When the world's single Jewish state locks horns with one of the 57 members of the Islamic Conference, the world organization is supposed to judge the dispute dispassionately. When Syria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, and China serve on the commission, they are supposed to assess human-rights issues honestly. This never happens, of course, but it is considered retrograde to say so. Perhaps that is because, with its noble intentions and its execrable record, the human-rights commission provides as vivid an illustration as one could want of the wishful thinking behind the very idea of the United Nations.

Scholars have documented the striking absence of war among democracies, and Americans have come to appreciate the critical difference between democracies and dictatorships. It is, indeed, the most important dividing line in international politics. But it is not the only one. There is also a division between the United States and the other democracies—over, precisely, the priority given to moral considerations in foreign policy. Questions of good and evil, right and wrong, carry more weight in the United States. To be sure, Washington may feather its nest through trade barriers or turn a blind eye to repression in Saudi Arabia, but most of the issues that have separated the Atlantic allies since the cold war have revolved around Europe's greater cynicism abroad, whether toward China, Cuba, Serbia, Iran, Iraq, or the Palestinian Authority.

The lesson in all of this is the wisdom of American unilateralism, and the folly of submitting to any new accretion of international treaties and organizations or any further role for the UN in Middle East peace efforts. Independent American action need not be a token of superpower arrogance or high-handedness. It is much more a matter of doing what we alone have both the power and the heart to do—namely, to inject a modicum of principle into the "community of nations."

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Does the U.S. Finally Understand Israel?

Michael B. Oren

HAS THE Bush administration taken a new and promising turn in American policy toward Israel? Many people have thought so, and have pointed to signs that seem to illustrate that new turn. But in many respects, the administration's diplomacy has also seemed to be cast from a traditional mold, with all of the mixed characteristics of both the recent and the not so recent past. Both lines were on vivid display during the crisis months of this past winter and spring.

Following an especially intense wave of Palestinian suicide bombings in February and March that culminated in a blast at a Netanya hotel on March 27, killing 29 civilians on the first night of Passover, Israel responded with a major incursion into the West Bank under the code name Operation Defensive Shield. Initially, President Bush appeared to approve of Israel's actions. "Suicide bombers [operating] in the name of religion is simple terror," Bush told reporters on the second day of the fighting, adding, "the civilized world must band together to stop this kind of activity if we expect there to be peace in the Middle East." White House spokesman Ari Fleischer sharpened the point: "The President understands and respects Israel's right to defend herself and to live in security." Significantly, the administration declined to criticize Israel for massing its tanks around the offices of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and effectively placing Yasir Arafat under quarantine. Israeli forces, the Bush administration intimated, would be given sufficient time to do what they had set out to do, namely, destroy the infrastructure used by terrorists in launching attacks on civilians within Israel.

Almost immediately, however, a severe backlash to the Israeli military operation developed in Europe and the Arab world, and murmurs of discontent, if not second thoughts, seemed to surface within the American administration as well. In short order, Secretary of State Colin Powell was protesting that Israel was being too aggressive. By April 5, just a week after the operation began, President Bush himself was snapping, "enough is enough." Suddenly, the administration publicly reconfirmed Arafat's role as the legitimate leader of the Palestinian people, and Powell was dispatched to Ramallah to meet with the Palestinian leader and break his isolation. The administration also began to praise a Saudi "peace plan" that insisted on Israel's return to the pre-1967 borders—a position long unacceptable to Jerusalem.

What was going on? As it happens, the two countervailing currents here discernible in microcosm have long been characteristic of U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East. In order to grasp what, if anything, is new in the Bush administration's approach, one must first have an understanding of what came before.

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U.S. POLICY toward Israel as it has unfolded over a half-century might best be described as one of benign ambivalence, an ambivalence that has been visible from the outset and that has proved remarkably persistent. The ambivalence flows in part from the fact that the U.S. government itself has often been divided in its attitude.

Some influential agencies in Washington, especially the State Department and the Pentagon, have at different times been hostile toward Israel. Their objections have typically been framed in economic and strategic terms. In Israel's earliest days, prominent voices in the State and Defense Departments warned that American support for the Jewish state would cause Arab nations to cease shipping their oil to the West and drive the Arabs into the arms of the Soviet Union. "Oil—that is the side we ought to be on," remarked Defense Secretary James Forrestal in the late 1940's. Secretary of State George Marshall swore not to vote for Harry Truman's reelection in 1948 if the President recognized the new nation, and Marshall's successor, John Foster Dulles, privately referred to Israel as "the millstone around our necks."

Such antagonistic attitudes have been balanced, however, by a far greater degree of sympathy for Israel in Congress, a body broadly reflective of public opinion and sensitive to constituents' interests. Most Presidents, too, have tended to be more on the approving side than not. A succession of chief executives has supported Israel not only out of electoral calculations but also out of respect for Israel's military strength and a deep-seated identification with its democratic institutions. "The United States has a special relationship with Israel comparable only to that which it has with Britain," John F. Kennedy once told Israeli foreign minister Golda Meir. Said Lyndon B. Johnson: "The United States is foursquare behind Israel . . . a friend in the truest sense." Even Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose election owed virtually nothing to the Jewish vote, publicly declared his commitment to Israel's security. Later Republican presidents—Richard M. Nixon and Ronald Reagan—stood fast with Israel through moments of crisis and great danger.

Over the years, the equilibrium between the two opposing propensities in government has shifted in favor of the more sympathetic side, and U.S. policy toward Israel has, on the whole, turned increasingly obliging and supportive. The United States became a significant arms provider to Israel in 1965, when for the first time it agreed to sell it tanks and jets. In the wake of the Six-Day war in June 1967, and through both the 1968-1970 war of attrition and the 1973 Yom Kippur war, the flow of weapons steadily increased, and thereafter the U.S. became Israel's main supplier. If American military aid amounted to only tens of millions of dollars annually in the 1960's, today it is worth $3 billion a year. A large fraction of this money is earmarked for the purchase of American arms, which helps further to solidify ties, building a powerful lobby for continued military aid within American industry.

The burgeoning U.S.-Israeli strategic relationship has been accompanied by a tighter diplomatic partnership. In the 1940's and 50's, the bond between the two countries was not especially strong; David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, never set foot in the White House. But by 1967 the atmosphere had begun to shift. After the Six-Day war, the U.S. was instrumental in drafting UN Security Council Resolution 242, which responded to Israel's demand for "secure and recognized borders" without requiring it to return all the territories that had fallen into its possession in that conflict. In subsequent years, a series of peace initiatives and separation-of-forces agreements, many of them fostered by the U.S., brought even closer coordination between the two countries. Increasingly sensitized to Israel's concerns, American policymakers consented to forgo contacts with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) until it renounced terror and accepted Israel's right to exist. By 1979 and the signing of the Camp David accords, the U.S. had become a full partner in guaranteeing peace between Israel and Egypt, its largest Arab neighbor.

BUT IF U.S. policy seems to have steadily shifted in Israel's favor over recent decades, this is hardly to say that the two countries enjoy a harmonious relationship or always see eye to eye. Not only does the intra-governmental tension I alluded to earlier intrude reliably from time to time, and occasionally propel policy in an antagonistic direction, but there are a number of issues on which the viewpoints of the two countries, and their interests, have sharply diverged.

The status of Jerusalem is one area of disagreement. Although it is not something that American diplomats emphasize these days, the U.S. has never dissociated itself from the internationalization of the city as stipulated in the UN partition resolution of 1947. After Israel's founding, American diplomats refrained from attending meetings at the Israeli foreign ministry in West Jerusalem, Israel's declared capital. In the decades since the divided

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city was reunited by Israeli forces in June 1967, every American President has opposed Israel's claim of sovereignty. Moreover, Presidents from Truman through Clinton have seriously considered proposals to place the city's holy sites under international supervision. Though Congress has repeatedly called for the transfer of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and though presidential candidates from both parties (including George W. Bush) have repeatedly paid lip service to the idea, the site selected for that embassy remains vacant.

Israeli settlements on the West Bank and in Gaza are an even more contentious issue. Consecutive administrations have classified the West Bank and Gaza as "occupied" territories (Israel prefers the term "disputed"), rejected any Israeli claims to them, and condemned Israeli efforts to settle Jews on the land. Jimmy Carter went farthest, demanding a total freeze on settlement activity and calling the settlements "illegal." A less strident formulation has been in use since the administration of George Bush, Sr.: the settlements are deemed "obstacles to peace"—or, in Bill Clinton's emphatic phrase, "absolutely, absolutely an obstacle to peace."

If such differences have been a continuing source of friction, far more charged are the issues arising from Israel's military doctrine. The Jewish state has a longstanding policy of retaliating against terrorist acts and, in wartime, of striking preemptively. Neither of these approaches has sat well with the United States.

Almost immediately upon its founding, Israel was subjected to terrorist attacks across all of its borders. The response of the fledgling state was to mount reprisal raids not only against terrorist strongholds but also against the Arab countries that were hosting and encouraging the terrorists. Israeli leaders considered these operations a necessity, a way of ensuring that Jewish blood would not be shed with impunity and of deterring future assaults. They also insisted that their actions were fully legal under international statute, being an application of Israel's right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

THE UNITED States has seldom agreed. Reprisal raids "dangerously heighten existing tensions," said John Foster Dulles in 1955. "The very insecurity of which Israel complains is aggravated by such a policy." A decade later, Dean Rusk, Lyndon Johnson's Secretary of State, declared that "we cannot agree to or condone [Israeli] retaliatory action." A decade after that, Jimmy Carter expressed grave reservations about Israel's reprisal operations in Lebanon following the murder of 35 of its civilians in a terrorist attack on a bus; the Carter administration sponsored a UN Security Council resolution demanding that Israel "immediately cease its military action" without so much as a mention of the terrorism that had prompted it. In 1996, President Clinton leaned hard on Israel for Operation Grapes of Wrath, mounted in response to Hizbullah attacks on its northern border. And, most recently, as we have seen, there was the mixed reaction to Operation Defensive Shield.

In pressing Israel toward what they call "restraint," U.S. officials have on some occasions complained that Israeli retaliation has been "disproportionate" to what provoked it. More generally, they have also worried aloud that such actions might prove disruptive to larger U.S. economic and strategic concerns. During the cold war, it was said that our vital oil supplies were being put at risk, as well as our need to involve the Arab states on our side of the East-West conflict. In the post-cold-war era, the rationale has been that Israel's military incursions will fan the flames of radical Islam and thus potentially destabilize moderate Arab regimes.

If the United States has routinely expressed strong disapproval of Israeli retaliatory actions and tried to limit their scale and scope, it has also, on every occasion, vigorously opposed and sometimes thwarted Israel's war-making. In the Suez crisis of 1956, President Eisenhower was furious over Israel's participation in the Anglo-French military campaign against Egypt (even though Egypt had recently acquired massive amounts of weaponry from the USSR and was tying itself closer to the Kremlin). Eisenhower threatened Jerusalem with economic sanctions and compelled it to withdraw from the territory it had seized.

Even in 1967 and 1973, with Arab armies poised on Israel's borders, the U.S. cautioned Israel not to strike first. "I must emphasize the necessity for Israel not to make itself responsible for the initiation of hostilities," Johnson wrote to Israeli leaders on June 3, two days before the outbreak of the Six-Day war. Six years later, in 1973, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger told the Israelis that "If you fire the first shot, you won't have a dogcatcher in this country supporting you. . . . Don't preempt." During the Lebanon war in 1982, President Reagan warned Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin that "a refusal by Israel to accept a cease-fire will aggravate further the serious threat to world peace." In the Persian Gulf war, the administration of George

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Bush exerted intense pressure on the government of Yitzhak Shamir not to retaliate for Iraqi Scud attacks on Tel Aviv.

CONTINUING THROUGH presidential and congressional elections, the rise of powerful lobbies, changing demographic and economic trends, the violent vicissitudes of the Middle East, and tectonic shifts in world politics, America's policy of benign ambivalence has thus persisted, unimpeded. This consistency is especially astonishing when one considers that, in almost every respect, ambivalence has proved counterproductive.

For one thing, Arab leaders have drawn conclusions from U.S. policy that are seldom those intended by Washington. Friction between Israel and the U.S. is almost always perceived among Arabs as an opening to be exploited in their ongoing war against the Jewish state. Although U.S. policymakers believe that leaning on Israel is a means of maintaining tranquility, in the Arab world such pressure tends to foster the belief that the United States will at the very least keep Israel on a tight leash and perhaps coerce it into accepting terms more favorable to the Arab side. In this way, U.S. ambivalence reinforces Arab recalcitrance and sets in motion a vicious cycle: the harder the U.S. pushes Israel to make concessions in the name of "peace," the more elusive real peace becomes.

Israeli leaders, for their part, have discovered another set of lessons from Washington's consistent inconsistencies. They cannot help noticing that, for the most part, Israel has not been rewarded for exercising forbearance. Indeed, on those occasions when Israel has buckled to American pressure, and especially when it has refrained from responding to provocations, it has earned not gratitude or leniency but additional pressure.

Israel endured huge casualties and suffered a major military reversal in the Yom Kippur war of October 1973 because it consented to Henry Kissinger's plea not to strike Egypt first. In the aftermath, it was "rewarded" by an American insistence that it withdraw from the territory it had succeeded in capturing. In the Persian Gulf war, the pattern was much the same: Israel submitted to the U.S. demand that it not respond to Iraq's Scud missile attacks, but the end of the war failed to bring about a warmer U.S.-Israel relationship. To the contrary, running directly against Israel's diplomatic objectives, George Bush embarked upon a major campaign to twist Israel's arm to sacrifice "territory for peace."

Having met with condemnation for even limited counteroffensives against terrorism, Israeli leaders have repeatedly drawn another conclusion: that they have little to lose by launching larger-scale operations. This is precisely what happened in 1956, 1967, and 1982 when, exasperated by America's refusal to sanction *any* exercise of its right to self-defense, Israel went to war. In this sense, Operation Defensive Shield, a major military action embarked upon after fourteen full months of relentless terrorism and in the face of American pressure to show restraint, was itself part of a broader pattern.

And here is a final irony: on those occasions when Israel has asserted, and exercised, its right to self-defense, the American reaction, after an initial burst of anger, has almost always been one of heightened respect. Despite Lyndon Johnson's unequivocal warning not to launch a preemptive strike, the June 1967 war yielded major improvements in U.S.-Israel relations. Israel's attack on Iraq's nuclear facility at Osirak in 1981 was also condemned by the U.S. in the strongest terms, which did not stop strategic cooperation between the two countries from flourishing in its aftermath. Today, Israel's bombing of the Osirak reactor is universally praised as necessary and heroic; without it, Saddam Hussein might already have developed nuclear weapons.

WHAT, THEN, are the chances that George W. Bush and his team will think afresh about the tortuous history of U.S. policy, and will embark on a new and less ambivalent course? The answer is by no means clear.

On one side of the ledger, there is the unmistakable fact that, not long after taking office, Bush indicated his intention to part with the habits of his predecessors and declined to place Arab-Israeli negotiations at center stage. This was indeed a welcome shift away from a policy that in the past almost inevitably led to major diplomatic clashes with Israel—and to little or no movement toward its stated goal. Nor, Bush made it clear, would progress in peace negotiations be a prerequisite for closer U.S. ties with Israel; these would be strengthened regardless of where negotiations stood. Finally, the President made plain his frustration with continuing Palestinian violence and rejectionism, and with Yasir Arafat in particular. Under Bill Clinton, Arafat had been the foreign leader most frequently invited to the White House; Bush shut him out entirely.

The catastrophe of September 11 served only to reinforce this seeming new tendency in American

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policy. There was, to begin with, the sheer psychological impact of thousands of Americans dying at the hands of Arab extremists ideologically linked to those who had been murdering Israelis. The ensuing U.S. campaign against terrorism brought renewed attention to the similarities between the two countries' situation, with many in the United States expressing a greater sympathy for Israel's plight. In the following months, Bush directed the State Department to add Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to the U.S. list of terrorist organizations; this was the first time that an American President had publicly labeled an enemy of Israel as an enemy of the United States.

Most significant of all were Bush's own words explaining the scope of the U.S. war on terrorism in his address to a joint session of Congress:

> Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.

September 11 thus put the United States squarely on Israel's side in its conflict with those of its neighbors who had been harboring and supporting terrorists for decades.

FOR A President who had received very few votes from American Jews, George W. Bush's support of Israel has rightly struck observers as something extraordinary. At times it has been so open and passionate that many have concluded it flows not primarily, or not only, from strategic considerations but directly from the heart.

That may well be the case. But in matters of state, sentiment only carries one so far. Not only were there sharp zigzags in the administration's public rhetoric this past spring, there are also mounting signs that, in an effort to appease opinion in Europe and in the Arab world, and get on with the war on terror, Washington may be contemplating imposing some sort of solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute—precisely the sort of initiative that has boomeranged in the past and that George W. Bush pointedly eschewed upon taking office.

One cannot now say with any confidence how all this will play out. What one can say is that, seen from the long view, Israel's relationship with the United States is at one of its historic high points. It is unfortunately another question whether ambivalence, with all its costs, has truly had its day.

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France's Jewish Problem

Michel Gurfinkiel

In 1928, the young New York intellectual Sidney Hook embarked on a tour of Europe that included a stay of several months in Germany. More than a half-century later, he would write in his memoirs, *Out of Step*: "As incredible as it may sound to most people today, anti-Semitism was much less apparent at the time in Berlin than in New York City." Indeed, in the Weimar Republic that had been established in 1919, both Jews as individuals and the Jewish community as a whole were flourishing; in the United States, by contrast, nativist prejudice in the late 20's was on the rise and free immigration had been sharply curtailed.

It took no more than five years after Hook's visit, however, for Germany to become the most murderously anti-Semitic nation in history. By September 1930, economic depression and mass unemployment had propelled the tiny Nazi party into mainstream politics. By January 1933, Adolf Hitler had become chancellor of the Reich; by March 1933, he was firmly entrenched as dictator.

It is always perilous to draw strict parallels in history, and in any case both the Nazi regime and the genocide it engineered—the Holocaust—were exceptional in too many respects to bear recounting. Still, what remains striking in the light of Hook's observation is the sheer rapidity with which Nazi anti-Semitism established itself within a seemingly peaceful and open society. Could such a reversal happen again in a Western nation, even if at a lower and less lethal level? This question, which has haunted many Jews since 1945 and until recently seemed largely theoretical, took on new significance over the past year in France.

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The latter half of the 20th century constituted a kind of golden age for French Jewry. A community whose numbers stood at around 300,000 at the end of World War II had by the 1990's increased enormously in size, through both natural growth and immigration from former French colonies in North Africa as well as from elsewhere around the Mediterranean and from Central and Eastern Europe. Although neither religion nor race is recorded in the French census, and although (unlike in Germany) there is no official registration of one's religious affiliation, it is reliably estimated that out of a total population of 60 million Frenchmen, roughly 1 percent, or between 600,000 and 700,000 people, are "fully involved" Jews, and perhaps an additional 200,000 manifest some awareness of Jewish origins or a concern with Jewish affairs.

Demographic growth has provided the critical mass necessary for cultural revival. More Jews means more synagogues, more and better schools,

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more social services. It means more consumers of kosher food (now a full-fledged industry), and more patrons of kosher restaurants. Jewish books in French, once virtually unknown, are a staple of the publishing business. There are Jewish radio stations and even Jewish TV networks.

As it has become easier to lead a Jewish life in France, many Jews have become more traditionalist in their habits and practice. Study groups in Talmud or Jewish thought have burgeoned, and some have evolved into real centers of learning. Distinct Orthodox neighborhoods have grown up in greater Paris as well as in Marseilles, Nice, and Strasbourg; in a number of places, Liberal (Reform) and Conservative congregations have been founded as well. Even secularist Jews have organized themselves here and there in self-conscious efforts to preserve a Jewish way of life. All in all, contemporary French Jewry has begun to look somewhat like American Jewry.

That is in social terms. In political terms, the situation in the two countries is very different. France's is not a federal system, nor is government rooted so thoroughly in electoral politics as is the case in the U.S.; the country is less a "republic" ruled by its citizens than a "state" administered by a professional class of civil servants. Lobbying for special interests, while widespread in fact, is still considered not quite legitimate, and religion- or community-based activism is frowned upon. As a result, although individual Jews have certainly achieved prominence in political life or in the civil service, or both, Jewish groups do not and cannot operate as freely and openly in the pursuit of their political interests as they do in the United States.

This is not to say that the influence of French Jews in public life has been insignificant. With regard to Israel, although it has so far proved impossible to change the frankly pro-Arab stance first charted by Charles de Gaulle in the wake of the Six-Day war of 1967, efforts to mitigate that stance over the decades have met with periodic success. Elsewhere, in matters pertaining to civil rights or religious observance, Holocaust memorials or the prosecution of Nazi criminals, Jewish interests have been readily accommodated. In 1994, the Socialist premier François Mitterrand instituted a Memorial Day Against Racism and Anti-Semitism to commemorate the round-up of foreign Jews in Paris during the German occupation. A year later, his Conservative successor Jacques Chirac went a step further, publicly acknowledging the Vichy regime's direct involvement in the Holocaust and offering financial compensation to the few survivors of French wartime persecution. In the 80's and 90's, Jewishness itself often functioned as a "plus" factor in the calculus of French political correctness—a trend that culminated in the burial of René Cassin, the Jewish legal adviser of Charles de Gaulle's Free French in 1940 and later the architect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in France's national vault, the Panthéon, alongside Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and Emile Zola.

But as the whole world knows by now, the golden age is over. So sharply and so abruptly has the situation deteriorated that by the end of 2001, Rabbi Michael Melchior, Israel's deputy foreign minister, could characterize France as "the most anti-Semitic country in the West." Were there a worldwide Richter scale of anti-Semitism, what has happened in France would qualify as an earthquake.

II

On October 3, 2000, the synagogue of Villepinte, a suburban neighborhood in northeastern Paris, was all but destroyed by arson in practically the first such case in France since the late Middle Ages. (The single exception had occurred in 1940 when the Nazis blew up the Central Synagogue of Strasbourg.) Following Villepinte, four more synagogues were burned over the next ten days, all of them in greater Paris, while in the whole of France, nineteen further attempts at arson were recorded against synagogues or other Jewish buildings, homes, or businesses. The week of October 7 also witnessed four incidents of vandalism or desecration, three of them involving synagogues, and eighteen more cases of anti-Jewish violence, from stonethrowing to beating. Most occurred in mixed neighborhoods with both Jewish and Muslim residents, and were connected in some way with the organized riots by Palestinians against Israel that had begun in Jerusalem in late September.

Anti-Jewish violence subsided in France after October 2000 but hardly ceased. It flared up again a year later after the September 11 terrorist attack on the United States, which generated a wave of pride among French Muslims. A third peak occurred around Passover and Easter of this year as the Palestinian *intifada* against Israel turned into open warfare. In Lyons, an anti-Jewish gang used a car equipped with battering rams to smash the doors of a local synagogue and community center and then set the building aflame. In Marseilles, another synagogue was entirely destroyed by arson. In Toulouse, a man opened fire on a kosher butch-

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er shop. At Villeurbanne, near Lyons, an Orthodox couple on their way to prayer were beaten in the street. At Bondy, near Paris, hooded thugs assaulted the local Jewish soccer team and forced it to flee the field. A school bus was stoned by another gang in a new Orthodox neighborhood in Paris, while in the Marais district, at the heart of the old Jewish "Pletzl," a young man was abducted on his way home from synagogue on Friday night by three Arab immigrants and terrorized for two hours before being released.

Physical violence was accompanied by harassment and discrimination. These were particularly noticeable in the public schools, where Jewish pupils and teachers alike were subjected to ostracism and insults. In one by no means isolated incident, a twelve-year-old boy from a secular family was threatened and humiliated by his Arab schoolmates; in another, a Jewish high-school teacher was harassed by students and colleagues and denied help by the principal. All over France, annual "Holocaust-awareness" programs had to be canceled on account of student opposition.

Then there was the increasingly open and uninhibited expression of anti-Semitic sentiment. Although no French political party of significant size called for anti-Jewish policies as such, the Green party and related groups on the Left denounced "Jewish religious fundamentalists" and pro-Israel activity. (On the other side of the political spectrum, the far-Right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen had indulged for years in anti-Semitic innuendo, but in the current crisis mostly held his tongue.) At pro-Palestinian rallies, calls to kill the Jews ("*Mort aux juifs!*") were raised again and again; anti-Jewish invective laced sermons preached in church; and there were anti-Jewish cartoons in the mainstream press. *Libération*, a left-of-center newspaper, carried several such cartoons, the most offensive of which, published the day after Christmas 2001, showed Prime Minister Ariel Sharon standing next to a cross with a hammer in his hand and nails in his mouth. The caption: "No Christmas for Arafat. But he is welcome on Easter." Two days earlier, at midnight mass in Montpellier, a Catholic priest had handed out the text for a hymn in the Occitan language that read: "He was born in Bethlehem, Palestine. He was born in Bethlehem, poor and innocent. Sharon shot him down."

All in all, 500 anti-Semitic incidents were recorded by CRIF, the umbrella organization of the Jewish community, from September 9, 2000 through early April 2002. Even if one were to go by the much lower figure given by the French ministry of the interior, the situation would have to be called incontrovertibly dire. It is true that, over this entire twenty-month period, no one was actually killed, or at least no incident turned deadly, whatever the intention. That distinguishes today's anti-Jewish attacks from, say, the bombing at the Rue Copernic synagogue in 1980 or the killing at the Goldenberg restaurant in 1982. But those two spectacular incidents in Paris almost certainly originated outside the country and thus indicated little about the state of local opinion. Today's anti-Jewish drumbeat obviously reflects indigenous sentiment.

III

OF EVEN deeper concern, and not only to Jews, was the refusal or unwillingness of the powers-that-be in France—the ruling parties of Right and Left, the mainstream political class, the mainstream media, most social institutions, even the Church—to treat the new situation with anything like the seriousness it deserved. Hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen of all stripes had demonstrated in protest after the Rue Copernic bombing; after the Goldenberg killing, President Mitterrand in person attended a Jewish service; and when the ancient Jewish cemetery in the southern town of Carpentras was desecrated in 1988, both Mitterrand and Chirac, the latter as leader of the opposition, made sure they were present at the protest march. Jean-Marie Le Pen's statements were stigmatized for years as major offenses against public morality and democracy.

But in 2000 and 2001, as anti-Jewish incidents occurred on a daily basis, the response was minimal to mute. Neither the Conservative President Chirac nor the Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin visited the burned synagogues, and Chirac repeatedly insisted in public that "there is no anti-Semitism at all in France." Not until the third wave of violence, in the spring of 2002 and on the eve of his own reelection campaign, did the president pay a brief visit of sympathy to the small synagogue at Le Havre. As for the media, with some exceptions they waited until the end of 2001 to take note of the issue in their headlines. The only protest rallies were those sponsored by Jewish organizations; the largest of them, held on April 7 of this year and attracting 120,000 people, was largely ignored by politicians.

This was hardly a case of neglect, benign or otherwise. Rather, there was a conscious effort on the part of the authorities to downplay the extent of the cri-

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sis and/or to present it as a symptom of some broader problem like intercommunal strife or "racism."

The response took various forms. One was to have the police, who in France are under the direct control of the central government, react as cautiously and discreetly as possible. Not that there was an outright failure to protect Jewish persons or institutions. Parking is prohibited in front of most Jewish sites in France, and at least in the big cities armed police are on duty during school and business hours or when services are being held; in fact, the easiest way to spot a synagogue or a Jewish school in Paris nowadays is to look for a security deployment. Patrols are frequent in Jewish neighborhoods, and squadrons of the CRS, France's tough anti-riot force, have been assigned to trouble spots.

But protection from crime is not suppression of crime. For the most part, perpetrators and suspects were not vigorously tracked down, very few assailants were arrested, and those hauled into court were let off with light sentences.

Another means of downplaying the problem was to release consistently low estimates of its extent or intensity. To this end, the ministry of the interior declined to register any act, however violent or abusive, that did not prevent someone from returning to work or school on the following day, thus disposing of most if not all of the cases of harassment and discrimination. Some acts were classified as "accidental" rather than as "violent," or as "violent" rather than as "anti-Semitic."

The judiciary did its part as well. Thus, in a ruling issued in March 2002 after almost eighteen months of investigation, a synagogue fire at Trappes in October 2000 was declared to be not a criminal act; the court dismissed as "mere boastfulness" a confession signed by six youngsters and chose to believe instead the belated testimony of a security guard who said he had inadvertently dropped a burning cigarette on the premises. In still another proceeding, concerning an attack on a synagogue and school in Créteil, near Paris, in which three young men were caught redhanded, the judges issued a reduced penalty on the grounds that motivations other than anti-Semitism may have come into play.

Another tactic favored by the authorities was to pretend that what was plaguing France was a problem in "community relations." Abetting this false rendition of reality was the French taste for intellectual symmetry, which has always exceeded the French taste for fact. Evil and the urge to evil, being integral components of human nature, must be equally distributed (it is held) among individuals, communities, nations, and races. In the bitter paraphrase of Philippe Desproges, a French humorist of the 70's: "Of course, the Nazis didn't like the Jews. But to be fair, one has to admit that the Jews didn't like the Nazis, either."

Today's version of this sort of "analysis" took a no less twisted form. Insofar as French Jews were victims, they had to be seen as villains, too; and since most of the violence against them stemmed from the French Muslim community, it followed that the culprit must be some kind of reciprocal tension between the two communities. As it happens, Muslim civil-rights organizations have listed only twelve acts of "Islamophobic" violence for the year 2001 and the first four months of 2002, with no suggestion that any of them was attributable to Jewish extremists. But statistics were not allowed to interfere with logic, however specious.

Other tricks came into play as well, of which my own favorite was the "transference theory." Yes, this line of reasoning went, anti-Semitism might seem to be rampant among French Muslims, but it was not so much a hatred directed at Jews per se as it was a naive expression of resentment against France as a whole, only "transferred," in the Freudian sense, to the Jews as a convenient stand-in.

All in all, it took an official protest to Prime Minister Jospin by Roger Cukierman, the head of CRIF, last December, followed by an editorial in *L'Express* and a front-page story in *Le Figaro*, France's leading conservative daily, before the issue of anti-Semitism began to be debated publicly. On February 19, *Le Monde* ran a telling cartoon: a policeman standing in front of six destroyed synagogues asks his captain, "How many do we need in order to start mentioning anti-Semitism?" The question could well have been directed to the paper itself: how many synagogues had to be destroyed in order for this cartoon to be published?

Nor did even this spell the end of the myth that Jews were equally to blame for the troubles. As soon as April's mass rally was announced, rumors spread that "Jewish extremists" were preparing for a street war. On April 5, *Le Monde* devoted several pages to the forthcoming demonstration, postulating that the Jewish community was "divided" and warning that "right-wing extremists" were planning to disrupt a parallel rally by leftists and the French branch of Peace Now.

In the event, the rally represented a rare moment of brotherly feeling, both among Jews themselves and between Jews and non-Jews, with great

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joint displays of the French tricolor and the Israeli blue-and-white. Inevitably, however, just as the crowds were slowly disbanding at about 8 o'clock in the evening, someone stabbed the chief of the riot police, giving the media a 24-hour feast of speculation about Jewish extremists. By the time it emerged that the officer's wounds were in fact quite superficial and that a gang of non-Jews may have been responsible, the damage had been done: Jewish violence, Jewish extremism, and "tension" between Jews and other unnamed ethnic groups had been established as unquestioned facts.

IV

IF DEMOGRAPHICS was the driving force behind the Jewish golden age in the second half of the 20th century, demographics will be seen to have played a major part as well in the rise of French Muslims in the first half of the 21st. The fact is that France itself is undergoing a partial Islamicization. The Muslim population, already ten times the size of the Jewish community, is growing rapidly, and the thorough transformation it is wreaking in France's ethnic and religious fabric obviously has much to do both with the increase in anti-Semitism and with the official denial of it.

The modern Muslim community in France stems ultimately from the country's various overseas colonies, the protectorates or mandates of Algeria, Tunisia, the Sahara and West Africa, Morocco, Syria, and Lebanon. Inevitably, the more Islamic lands the French added to their empire, the more Muslims settled in France proper. A turning point was World War I, when 300,000 Muslims from the Maghreb were drafted to fight or otherwise aid the war effort, one third of whom stayed in the country after the war. In 1920 the French parliament passed a special law to fund a Great Mosque in Paris (notwithstanding the 1905 law separating church and state). By the late 50's and early 60's, when the empire dissolved, a Muslim population of a half-million was in place.

Then, in little more than ten years, it more than tripled. In the 1960's the influx came mainly from Algeria as some Muslims who had fought in the French army were "repatriated" along with their families; they were joined by civilian Muslim Algerians who had not formally renounced their former French citizenship and by hundreds of thousands of migrant workers not only from North Africa but also from black African countries like Senegal and Mali. By 1974, the Muslim population approached the two-million mark.

Many French leaders were already quite concerned. One of them was Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the Conservative who, in April 1974, succeeded Georges Pompidou to the presidency and who promptly issued restrictive measures. These, however, turned into a classic example of the law of unintended consequences. Although further immigration was suspended, foreigners who had already entered France were granted the same rights as French citizens in terms of housing, welfare, and education—and were allowed to bring in their relatives. Thanks to this last concession, and to the fact that Muslim immigrants were not only uninterested in birth control but tended to practice polygamy, the community grew still larger. The more numerous it became, the harder it was to change immigration policy yet again, to enforce national-cultural norms, or even to discuss the matter candidly. To this day, the government and the intellectuals are reluctant to monitor the demographics of French Islam, with the curious result that estimates tend to undergo quantum leaps every five or ten years.

In 1995, an authoritative report in *Le Monde* gave a figure of three to four million Muslims in France. In the wake of the 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections, the accepted figure has been raised to about six million, or fully 10 percent of the population. Such a dramatic increase—50 percent in under ten years—would suggest either that the earlier figures were much too conservative or that illegal immigration has reached unprecedented levels. Some demographers, moreover, think that the true number may be closer to seven or even eight million.

Given a birthrate among Muslim women that, though lower than what it was two decades ago, is still much higher than among non-Muslim French women, what we are witnessing is a steady replacement of the older Christian and Jewish communities by a newer Islamic element. The shift is all the more noticeable in generational terms: Muslims may make up 10 percent of the French population as a whole, but in many places their children account for 30 to 40 percent of the teenage population. In contemporary French parlance, "young people" is often a euphemism for Muslims and/or immigrants.

To be sure, a fair number of French Muslims have integrated into mainstream society, just like immigrant groups before them. Some of these "republican Muslims" insist on being regarded as French citizens plain and simple, while others embrace a hyphenated (French-Muslim, or French-Arab, or French-Berber) identity. Most also reject

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anti-Semitism and take pride in the age-old kinship between Islam and Judaism. Ali Magoudi, a psychoanalyst, has written extensively about the Holocaust; Malek Boutih, a left-of-center leader of the group SOS Racisme, extended open support to the Jewish community throughout the current cycle of violence; Zair Kedadouche and Hamid Lafrad, elected Conservative officials, were no less outspoken in this respect.

But a much larger part of the Muslim community is not integrating at all. Rather, it is turning into a "separatist" underclass that owes exclusive allegiance to Islam and to the Islamic nations—a circumstance that was highlighted last fall when a largely French-Muslim crowd booed the *Marseillaise* at a France-Algeria soccer match. These Muslims also tend to be rabid, unreconstructed anti-Semites, after the fashion of the countries from which they have come. For them, anti-Semitism is a daily staple, to which the Middle East conflict and the saga of Osama bin Laden have added more zest.

Between the relatively few Gallicized or "republican" Muslims and the much larger underclass, there is a third, more ambiguous group who are socially and politically quite well integrated but still tend to embrace an all-Muslim ideology; who may frown on anti-Semitism, especially when directed at synagogue-going Jews, but nevertheless indulge in extremist rhetoric when it comes to Israel and the Middle East. Soheir Bencheikh, the self-styled Grand Mufti of Marseilles, has for instance simultaneously condemned anti-Jewish violence and defended French Muslim "solidarity with a Palestinian people . . . murdered day after day by bloodthirsty and revanchist Israeli leaders."

It is perilous enough that French Jews are confronted with a group so quickly expanding and so largely hostile. But the collateral effects are even worse. Rational debate about the Israeli-Arab conflict or the terrorist threat cannot easily be conducted in a country where some 10 percent of the population and a larger percentage of young people identify with the most radical elements in the Arab/Islamic world. Moreover, extremist Muslims tend to ally themselves with other extremist groups Left and Right, and thus to bring size, breadth, and market potential to a whole subculture of delusion and fanaticism. Today's runaway best-seller in France is Thierry Meyssan's *The Awful Scam*, whose thesis is that what we saw on television last September 11 was a hoax, carefully staged by American rightists and the Israeli Mossad. Similarly, both hard-core anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial, marginal phenomena until very recently, have gained traction thanks to the candid espousal of such themes by Muslims. In the words of the political scientist Frederic Encel, "What is an average French teacher to do when 70 percent of the class object to a course in religious tolerance giving Judaism its proper due, or simply refuse to attend a discussion about the Holocaust on the grounds that it is a Zionist lie?" The answer: "More often than not, he or she drops the matter altogether."

Most pro-Arab or pro-Muslim books published in France over the last years tend to display distinct anti-Semitic features. That is certainly true, for instance, of Danielle Sallenave's *Travelogues in Occupied Palestine*, a best-seller from 1998. The author of twenty books and a writer of some distinction, Sallenave spent all of several days "investigating" the situation in Israel and the Palestinian Authority before delivering herself of a tract suffused with an almost biological hatred for everything Israeli or Jewish. (Both the country and the people are described by her as "alien," "unreal," fake, a sort of cancerous anti-matter that has wiped away the "real" Palestinian country and that must be wiped away in turn.) The nine pages she devotes to the ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Mea Shearim in Jerusalem, with its "absurd, rigid, fanatical, maniacal loyalty to ritual, so obviously devoid of any real, deep, spiritual life," and—"particularly frightening"—its women "under the sanction of an intensely procreative sexuality," offer one of the most sustained assaults on Orthodox Judaism ever written in the French language.

Another collateral result of the rise of French Islam is what might be called "Bonifacism." Until late last summer, Pascal Boniface was chiefly known as a socialist militant and the founder of the Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques, or IRIS, a small think-tank devoted to world affairs. Then in August 2001 he published, in *Le Monde*, a "Letter to an Israeli Friend" that was neither friendly nor intended for Israelis; rather, it was a warning shot across the bow of French Jewry. Here is the relevant passage:

> In France, the Jewish community would be ill-advised, in the medium term, to extend too much indulgence to the Israeli government. . . . The Arab and/or Muslim community may be less well organized, but it will soon act as a counterweight and will quickly weigh even more.

As if this veiled threat were not enough, another text by Boniface soon surfaced that had been

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intended for circulation exclusively within the Socialist-party elite. Predicting that the outcome of this spring's presidential and parliamentary elections would depend on the Arab/Muslim vote, he urged what amounted to a complete break between the Left and the Jewish community.

As a doctrine, Bonifacism means that, since Jews need no longer be seen as a significant factor in France, anti-Semitism need no longer be a concern of the political establishment. Conversely, since the Arab/Muslim community is becoming an ever more significant factor, its particular sins can be overlooked in the search for electoral advantage.

Bonifacism is particularly relevant to the Left. For about twenty years, the Socialists and their allies—first the Communists, then the Greens and various Trotskyist groups—have managed to survive, as a minority, only by playing the far Right against the Conservatives. Now, with the emergence of the Muslim factor, there may be (some think) a chance to bring about a more favorable Left-Right balance—favorable, that is, to the Left.

Not that the Right is itself asleep on this issue. Some Conservative leaders, especially those of a Gaullist mold, see an alliance with French Muslims as a logical extension of the pro-Arab foreign policy they have championed since 1967. Hence, perhaps, their vocal annoyance when officials of Israel or the United States dare to express concern over what has been going on in France.

Beyond Bonifacism, a final element that complicates the political calculus in a different way is the widespread alarm about public safety. The Muslim underclass is arguably the most violent and dangerous component in contemporary French society, in terms both of crime and of terrorism. As long as the Jospin government was in charge, there was almost no political will to confront it. Synagogue-burning may be one thing; but cars and other property have also been torched or vandalized by gangs of "youths" all over the country, and terror-like acts have similarly been ascribed to Muslim groups. After Chirac's reelection in May 2002, the new Conservative minister of the interior promised to restore law and order, even if doing so entailed a "war of reconquest" in some neighborhoods. Jews and Jewish property, though not the main intended beneficiaries of this policy, may be beneficiaries of it nevertheless—a small but, in the circumstances, hardly negligible comfort.

V

ON THE ten-point Richter scale I proposed earlier, France today would probably earn a five—which on the real Richter scale registers an earthquake on the threshold between minor and major. French politics and French society may not be anti-Semitic if considered as a whole, but anti-Jewish symptoms are unmistakably growing in number and intensity, and serious countermeasures are called for.

That, basically, is how French Jews have been reacting since October 2000. They do not say, or for the most part think, that France is the reincarnation of the Third Reich. But they wonder about their future. Applications for immigration to Israel are on the rise, as also for North America (Canada as well as the U.S.). There may also be some movement from France to other European Union countries, especially Britain and Germany, although among those thinking of leaving the prevailing view is that all of Europe is dangerous territory.

Those not contemplating emigration are engaged in soul-searching. No fewer than six major books, by Jewish and non-Jewish authors, have appeared over the last six months on French "Judeophobia," and each of them is selling briskly. At synagogues and community centers, in the Jewish media, the future of France and of French Jewry is a constant topic of discussion.

Still, one wonders whether the issue has yet been properly defined. Pro-Jewish voices tend to regard the present crisis as evidence that France has reverted to its illiberal and anti-Semitic past; their favorite metaphor is Vichy, which is a gross exaggeration. Anti-Jewish voices likewise take Vichy as their criterion, and on that basis tend to deny that anti-Semitism is occurring at all—an equally untenable assumption. In fact, the signs point to a different reality: anti-Jewish attitudes are developing in France not because of "Vichyism," that is, an absence or diminution of liberalism, but largely because of the triumph of a particular *kind* of liberalism. If people who demonstrated against anti-Semitism twenty years ago are not demonstrating now, it is not because they have betrayed their former convictions, or undergone a sudden conversion to Le Penism, but because the place once occupied by the Jews in their very advanced consciousness is now occupied by Muslims and/or Palestinians.

Which suggests in turn a deeper problem. For much of the past half-century, most people in West-

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ern democracies have understood that the Nazi genocide was an assault on the Jews as a singular people, and also on the specifically Judeo-Christian body of ethics and beliefs that undergird Western civilization. But side by side with this view there has grown up another understanding, and it is the one that happens to be regnant in France. According to this latter view, Jews were only "accidentally" the victims of Nazism, which is itself only a name for a more global phenomenon—the phenomenon of "racism," or "xenophobia," or the "denial of human rights."

The motivation behind this shift in thinking was well-meaning enough, at least in part. It was believed, for instance, that non-Jews could sympathize more easily with the plight of the Jews if they could see *themselves* as potential targets of racist or totalitarian oppression. But what happened instead was that the specifically Jewish dimension of the Holocaust was gradually forgotten, or reconstructed, making it only a matter of time before Jews themselves could be turned into exemplars of Nazism when political expediency so demanded. It happened first to Israel, and now it is happening by association to Jewish citizens of Western European countries.

My own first glimpse of things to come occurred on a visit to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam as long ago as 1977. Anne Frank is an icon of the second approach to the Holocaust: a Jew, but at the same time so convincingly German-Dutch, so "universal," that any child in the world can identify with her. When I was there, the tour ended at a wall bearing premonitory messages about "new Holocausts in the making." One of these messages warned darkly of the consequences of the electoral victory in Israel, a few weeks earlier, of "Menachem Begin's far-Right Likud party."

The present anti-Semitic crisis in France should not be construed as a repetition of the past but rather as a thoroughly modern or, one might say, postmodern or postliberal development. France is not "racist" in the neo-Nazi or Ku Klux Klan sense of that word. But it is on the front line of what Samuel Huntington has termed the clash of civilizations, and both politically and culturally it is especially ill-equipped to deal with it.

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What Occupation?

Efraim Karsh

NO TERM has dominated the discourse of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict more than "occupation." For decades now, hardly a day has passed without some mention in the international media of Israel's supposedly illegitimate presence on Palestinian lands. This presence is invoked to explain the origins and persistence of the conflict between the parties, to show Israel's allegedly brutal and repressive nature, and to justify the worst anti-Israel terrorist atrocities. The occupation, in short, has become a catchphrase, and like many catchphrases it means different things to different people.

For most Western observers, the term "occupation" describes Israel's control of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, areas that it conquered during the Six-Day war of June 1967. But for many Palestinians and Arabs, the Israeli presence in these territories represents only the latest chapter in an uninterrupted story of "occupations" dating back to the very creation of Israel on "stolen" land. If you go looking for a book about Israel in the foremost Arab bookstore on London's Charing Cross Road, you will find it in the section labeled "Occupied Palestine." That this is the prevailing view not only among Arab residents of the West Bank and Gaza but among Palestinians living within Israel itself as well as elsewhere around the world is shown by the routine insistence on a Palestinian "right of return" that is meant to reverse the effects of the "1948 occupation"—i.e., the establishment of the state of Israel itself.

Palestinian intellectuals routinely blur any distinction between Israel's actions before and after 1967. Writing recently in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, the prominent Palestinian cultural figure Jacques Persiqian told his Jewish readers that today's terrorist attacks were "what you have brought upon yourselves after 54 years of systematic oppression of another people"—a historical accounting that, going back to 1948, calls into question not Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza but its very legitimacy as a state.

Hanan Ashrawi, the most articulate exponent of the Palestinian cause, has been even more forthright in erasing the line between post-1967 and pre-1967 "occupations." "I come to you today with a heavy heart," she told the now-infamous World Conference Against Racism in Durban last summer, "leaving behind a nation in captivity held hostage to an ongoing *naqba* [catastrophe]":

> In 1948, we became subject to a grave historical injustice manifested in a dual victimization: on the one hand, the injustice of dispossession, dispersion, and exile forcibly enacted on the population. . . . On the other hand, those who remained were subjected to the systematic oppression and brutality of an inhuman occupa-

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tion that robbed them of all their rights and liberties.

This original "occupation"—that is, again, the creation and existence of the state of Israel—was later extended, in Ashrawi's narrative, as a result of the Six-Day war:

> Those of us who came under Israeli occupation in 1967 have languished in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip under a unique combination of military occupation, settler colonization, and systematic oppression. Rarely has the human mind devised such varied, diverse, and comprehensive means of wholesale brutalization and persecution.

Taken together, the charges against Israel's various "occupations" represent—and are plainly intended to be—a damning indictment of the entire Zionist enterprise. In almost every particular, they are also grossly false.

In 1948, no Palestinian state was invaded or destroyed to make way for the establishment of Israel. From biblical times, when this territory was the state of the Jews, to its occupation by the British army at the end of World War I, Palestine had never existed as a distinct political entity but was rather part of one empire after another, from the Romans, to the Arabs, to the Ottomans. When the British arrived in 1917, the immediate loyalties of the area's inhabitants were parochial—to clan, tribe, village, town, or religious sect—and coexisted with their fealty to the Ottoman sultan-caliph as the religious and temporal head of the world Muslim community.

Under a League of Nations mandate explicitly meant to pave the way for the creation of a Jewish national home, the British established the notion of an independent Palestine for the first time and delineated its boundaries. In 1947, confronted with a determined Jewish struggle for independence, Britain returned the mandate to the League's successor, the United Nations, which in turn decided on November 29, 1947, to partition mandatory Palestine into two states: one Jewish, the other Arab.

The state of Israel was thus created by an internationally recognized act of national self-determination—an act, moreover, undertaken by an ancient people in its own homeland. In accordance with common democratic practice, the Arab population in the new state's midst was immediately recognized as a legitimate ethnic and religious minority. As for the prospective Arab state, its designated territory was slated to include, among other areas, the two regions under contest today—namely, Gaza and the West Bank (with the exception of Jerusalem, which was to be placed under international control).

As is well known, the implementation of the UN's partition plan was aborted by the effort of the Palestinians and of the surrounding Arab states to destroy the Jewish state at birth. What is less well known is that even if the Jews had lost the war, their territory would not have been handed over to the Palestinians. Rather, it would have been divided among the invading Arab forces, for the simple reason that none of the region's Arab regimes viewed the Palestinians as a distinct nation. As the eminent Arab-American historian Philip Hitti described the common Arab view to an Anglo-American commission of inquiry in 1946, "There is no such thing as Palestine in history, absolutely not."

This fact was keenly recognized by the British authorities on the eve of their departure. As one official observed in mid-December 1947, "it does not appear that Arab Palestine will be an entity, but rather that the Arab countries will each claim a portion in return for their assistance [in the war against Israel], unless [Transjordan's] King Abdallah takes rapid and firm action as soon as the British withdrawal is completed." A couple of months later, the British high commissioner for Palestine, General Sir Alan Cunningham, informed the colonial secretary, Arthur Creech Jones, that "the most likely arrangement seems to be Eastern Galilee to Syria, Samaria and Hebron to Abdallah, and the south to Egypt."

The British proved to be prescient. Neither Egypt nor Jordan ever allowed Palestinian self-determination in Gaza and the West Bank—which were, respectively, the parts of Palestine conquered by them during the 1948-49 war. Indeed, even UN Security Council Resolution 242, which after the Six-Day war of 1967 established the principle of "land for peace" as the cornerstone of future Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, did not envisage the creation of a Palestinian state. To the contrary: since the Palestinians were still not viewed as a distinct nation, it was assumed that any territories evacuated by Israel would be returned to their pre-1967 Arab occupiers—Gaza to Egypt, and the West Bank to Jordan. The resolution did not even mention the Palestinians by name, affirming instead the necessity "for achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem"—a clause that applied not just to the Palestinians but to the hundreds of thousands of Jews expelled from the Arab states following the 1948 war.

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At this time—we are speaking of the late 1960's—Palestinian nationhood was rejected by the entire international community, including the Western democracies, the Soviet Union (the foremost supporter of radical Arabism), and the Arab world itself. "Moderate" Arab rulers like the Hashemites in Jordan viewed an independent Palestinian state as a mortal threat to their own kingdom, while the Saudis saw it as a potential source of extremism and instability. Pan-Arab nationalists were no less adamantly opposed, having their own purposes in mind for the region. As late as 1974, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad openly referred to Palestine as "not only a part of the Arab homeland but a basic part of southern Syria"; there is no reason to think he had changed his mind by the time of his death in 2000.

Nor, for that matter, did the populace of the West Bank and Gaza regard itself as a distinct nation. The collapse and dispersion of Palestinian society following the 1948 defeat had shattered an always fragile communal fabric, and the subsequent physical separation of the various parts of the Palestinian diaspora prevented the crystallization of a national identity. Host Arab regimes actively colluded in discouraging any such sense from arising. Upon occupying the West Bank during the 1948 war, King Abdallah had moved quickly to erase all traces of corporate Palestinian identity. On April 4, 1950, the territory was formally annexed to Jordan, its residents became Jordanian citizens, and they were increasingly integrated into the kingdom's economic, political, and social structures.

For its part, the Egyptian government showed no desire to annex the Gaza Strip but had instead ruled the newly acquired area as an occupied military zone. This did not imply support of Palestinian nationalism, however, or of any sort of collective political awareness among the Palestinians. The local population was kept under tight control, was denied Egyptian citizenship, and was subjected to severe restrictions on travel.

WHAT, THEN, of the period after 1967, when these territories passed into the hands of Israel? Is it the case that Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have been the victims of the most "varied, diverse, and comprehensive means of wholesale brutalization and persecution" ever devised by the human mind?

At the very least, such a characterization would require a rather drastic downgrading of certain other well-documented 20th-century phenomena, from the slaughter of Armenians during World War I and onward through a grisly chronicle of tens upon tens of millions murdered, driven out, crushed under the heels of despots. By stark contrast, during the three decades of Israel's control, far fewer Palestinians were killed at Jewish hands than by King Hussein of Jordan in the single month of September 1970 when, fighting off an attempt by Yasir Arafat's PLO to destroy his monarchy, he dispatched (according to the Palestinian scholar Yezid Sayigh) between 3,000 and 5,000 Palestinians, among them anywhere from 1,500 to 3,500 civilians. Similarly, the number of innocent Palestinians killed by their Kuwaiti hosts in the winter of 1991, in revenge for the PLO's support for Saddam Hussein's brutal occupation of Kuwait, far exceeds the number of Palestinian rioters and terrorists who lost their lives in the first *intifada* against Israel during the late 1980's.

Such crude comparisons aside, to present the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as "systematic oppression" is itself the inverse of the truth. It should be recalled, first of all, that this occupation did not come about as a consequence of some grand expansionist design, but rather was incidental to Israel's success against a pan-Arab attempt to destroy it. Upon the outbreak of Israeli-Egyptian hostilities on June 5, 1967, the Israeli government secretly pleaded with King Hussein of Jordan, the de-facto ruler of the West Bank, to forgo any military action; the plea was rebuffed by the Jordanian monarch, who was loathe to lose the anticipated spoils of what was to be the Arabs' "final round" with Israel.

Thus it happened that, at the end of the conflict, Israel unexpectedly found itself in control of some one million Palestinians, with no definite idea about their future status and lacking any concrete policy for their administration. In the wake of the war, the only objective adopted by then-Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan was to preserve normalcy in the territories through a mixture of economic inducements and a minimum of Israeli intervention. The idea was that the local populace would be given the freedom to administer itself as it wished, and would be able to maintain regular contact with the Arab world via the Jordan River bridges. In sharp contrast with, for example, the U.S. occupation of postwar Japan, which saw a general censorship of all Japanese media and a comprehensive revision of school curricula, Israel made no attempt to reshape Palestinian culture. It limited its oversight of the Arabic press in the territories to military and security matters, and allowed the continued use in local schools of Jordanian textbooks filled with vile anti-Semitic and anti-Israel propaganda.

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Israel's restraint in this sphere—which turned out to be desperately misguided—is only part of the story. The larger part, still untold in all its detail, is of the astounding social and economic progress made by the Palestinian Arabs under Israeli "oppression." At the inception of the occupation, conditions in the territories were quite dire. Life expectancy was low; malnutrition, infectious diseases, and child mortality were rife; and the level of education was very poor. Prior to the 1967 war, fewer than 60 percent of all male adults had been employed, with unemployment among refugees running as high as 83 percent. Within a brief period after the war, Israeli occupation had led to dramatic improvements in general well-being, placing the population of the territories ahead of most of their Arab neighbors.

In the economic sphere, most of this progress was the result of access to the far larger and more advanced Israeli economy: the number of Palestinians working in Israel rose from zero in 1967 to 66,000 in 1975 and 109,000 by 1986, accounting for 35 percent of the employed population of the West Bank and 45 percent in Gaza. Close to 2,000 industrial plants, employing almost half of the work force, were established in the territories under Israeli rule.

During the 1970's, the West Bank and Gaza constituted the fourth fastest-growing economy *in the world*—ahead of such "wonders" as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Korea, and substantially ahead of Israel itself. Although GNP per capita grew somewhat more slowly, the rate was still high by international standards, with per-capita GNP expanding tenfold between 1968 and 1991 from $165 to $1,715 (compared with Jordan's $1,050, Egypt's $600, Turkey's $1,630, and Tunisia's $1,440). By 1999, Palestinian per-capita income was nearly double Syria's, more than four times Yemen's, and 10 percent higher than Jordan's (one of the better-off Arab states). Only the oil-rich Gulf states and Lebanon were more affluent.

Under Israeli rule, the Palestinians also made vast progress in social welfare. Perhaps most significantly, mortality rates in the West Bank and Gaza fell by more than two-thirds between 1970 and 1990, while life expectancy rose from 48 years in 1967 to 72 in 2000 (compared with an average of 68 years for all the countries of the Middle East and North Africa). Israeli medical programs reduced the infant-mortality rate of 60 per 1,000 live births in 1968 to 15 per 1,000 in 2000 (in Iraq the rate is 64, in Egypt 40, in Jordan 23, in Syria 22). And under a systematic program of inoculation, childhood diseases like polio, whooping cough, tetanus, and measles were eradicated.

No less remarkable were advances in the Palestinians' standard of living. By 1986, 92.8 percent of the population in the West Bank and Gaza had electricity around the clock, as compared to 20.5 percent in 1967; 85 percent had running water in dwellings, as compared to 16 percent in 1967; 83.5 percent had electric or gas ranges for cooking, as compared to 4 percent in 1967; and so on for refrigerators, televisions, and cars.

Finally, and perhaps most strikingly, during the two decades preceding the *intifada* of the late 1980's, the number of schoolchildren in the territories grew by 102 percent, and the number of classes by 99 percent, though the population itself had grown by only 28 percent. Even more dramatic was the progress in higher education. At the time of the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, not a single university existed in these territories. By the early 1990's, there were seven such institutions, boasting some 16,500 students. Illiteracy rates dropped to 14 percent of adults over age 15, compared with 69 percent in Morocco, 61 percent in Egypt, 45 percent in Tunisia, and 44 percent in Syria.

ALL THIS, as I have noted, took place against the backdrop of Israel's hands-off policy in the political and administrative spheres. Indeed, even as the PLO (until 1982 headquartered in Lebanon and thereafter in Tunisia) proclaimed its ongoing commitment to the destruction of the Jewish state, the Israelis did surprisingly little to limit its political influence in the territories. The publication of pro-PLO editorials was permitted in the local press, and anti-Israel activities by PLO supporters were tolerated so long as they did not involve overt incitements to violence. Israel also allowed the free flow of PLO-controlled funds, a policy justified by Minister of Defense Ezer Weizmann in 1978 in these (deluded) words: "It does not matter that they get money from the PLO, as long as they don't build arms factories with it." Nor, with very few exceptions, did Israel encourage the formation of Palestinian political institutions that might serve as a counterweight to the PLO. As a result, the PLO gradually established itself as the predominant force in the territories, relegating the pragmatic traditional leadership to the fringes of the political system.*

Given the extreme and even self-destructive leniency of Israel's administrative policies, what seems remarkable is that it took as long as it did for the PLO to entice the residents of the West Bank and

*For further details, see Menahem Milson, "How Not to Occupy the West Bank," COMMENTARY, April 1986.

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Gaza into a popular struggle against the Jewish state. Here Israel's counterinsurgency measures must be given their due, as well as the low level of national consciousness among the Palestinians and the sheer rapidity and scope of the improvements in their standard of living. The fact remains, however, that during the two-and-a-half decades from the occupation of the territories to the onset of the Oslo peace process in 1993, there was very little "armed resistance," and most terrorist attacks emanated from outside—from Jordan in the late 1960's, then from Lebanon.

In an effort to cover up this embarrassing circumstance, Fatah, the PLO's largest constituent organization, adopted the slogan that "there is no difference between inside and outside." But there *was* a difference, and a rather fundamental one. By and large, the residents of the territories wished to get on with their lives and take advantage of the opportunities afforded by Israeli rule. Had the West Bank eventually been returned to Jordan, its residents, all of whom had been Jordanian citizens before 1967, might well have reverted to that status. Alternatively, had Israel prevented the spread of the PLO's influence in the territories, a local leadership, better attuned to the real interests and desires of the people and more amenable to peaceful coexistence with Israel, might have emerged.

But these things were not to be. By the mid-1970's, the PLO had made itself into the "sole representative of the Palestinian people," and in short order Jordan and Egypt washed their hands of the West Bank and Gaza. Whatever the desires of the people living in the territories, the PLO had vowed from the moment of its founding in the mid-1960's—well *before* the Six-Day war—to pursue its "revolution until victory," that is, until the destruction of the Jewish state. Once its position was secure, it proceeded to do precisely that.

BY THE mid-1990's, thanks to Oslo, the PLO had achieved a firm foothold in the West Bank and Gaza. Its announced purpose was to lay the groundwork for Palestinian statehood but its real purpose was to do what it knew best—namely, create an extensive terrorist infrastructure and use it against its Israeli "peace partner." At first it did this tacitly, giving a green light to other terrorist organizations like Hamas and Islamic Jihad; then it operated openly and directly.

But what did all this have to do with Israel's "occupation"? The declaration signed on the White House lawn in 1993 by the PLO and the Israeli government provided for Palestinian self-rule in the entire West Bank and the Gaza Strip for a transitional period not to exceed five years, during which Israel and the Palestinians would negotiate a permanent peace settlement. During this interim period the territories would be administered by a Palestinian Council, to be freely and democratically elected after the withdrawal of Israeli military forces both from the Gaza Strip and from the populated areas of the West Bank.

By May 1994, Israel had completed its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (apart from a small stretch of territory containing Israeli settlements) and the Jericho area of the West Bank. On July 1, Yasir Arafat made his triumphant entry into Gaza. On September 28, 1995, despite Arafat's abysmal failure to clamp down on terrorist activities in the territories now under his control, the two parties signed an interim agreement, and by the end of the year Israeli forces had been withdrawn from the West Bank's populated areas with the exception of Hebron (where redeployment was completed in early 1997). On January 20, 1996, elections to the Palestinian Council were held, and shortly afterward both the Israeli civil administration and military government were dissolved.

The geographical scope of these Israeli withdrawals was relatively limited; the surrendered land amounted to some 30 percent of the West Bank's overall territory. But its impact on the Palestinian population was nothing short of revolutionary. At one fell swoop, Israel relinquished control over virtually all of the West Bank's 1.4 million residents. Since that time, nearly 60 percent of them—in the Jericho area and in the seven main cities of Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Hebron—have lived entirely under Palestinian jurisdiction. Another 40 percent live in towns, villages, refugee camps, and hamlets where the Palestinian Authority exercises civil authority but, in line with the Oslo accords, Israel has maintained "overriding responsibility for security." Some two percent of the West Bank's population—tens of thousands of Palestinians—continue to live in areas where Israel has complete control, but even there the Palestinian Authority maintains "functional jurisdiction."

In short, since the beginning of 1996, and certainly following the completion of the redeployment from Hebron in January 1997, 99 percent of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have not lived under Israeli occupation. By no conceivable stretching of words can the anti-Israel violence emanating from the territories during these years be made to qualify as resistance

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to foreign occupation. In these years there has *been* no such occupation.

IF THE stubborn persistence of Palestinian terrorism is not attributable to the continuing occupation, many of the worst outrages against Israeli civilians likewise occurred—contrary to the mantra of Palestinian spokesmen and their apologists—not at moments of breakdown in the Oslo "peace process" but at its high points, when the prospect of Israeli withdrawal appeared brightest and most imminent.

Suicide bombings, for example, were introduced in the atmosphere of euphoria only a few months after the historic Rabin-Arafat handshake on the White House lawn: eight people were murdered in April 1994 while riding a bus in the town of Afula. Six months later, 21 Israelis were murdered on a bus in Tel Aviv. In the following year, five bombings took the lives of a further 38 Israelis. During the short-lived government of the dovish Shimon Peres (November 1995-May 1996), after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, 58 Israelis were murdered within the span of one week in three suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Further disproving the standard view is the fact that terrorism was largely *curtailed* following Benjamin Netanyahu's election in May 1996 and the consequent slowdown in the Oslo process. During Netanyahu's three years in power, some 50 Israelis were murdered in terrorist attacks—a third of the casualty rate during the Rabin government and a sixth of the casualty rate during Peres's term.

There was a material side to this downturn in terrorism as well. Between 1994 and 1996, the Rabin and Peres governments had imposed repeated closures on the territories in order to stem the tidal wave of terrorism in the wake of the Oslo accords. This had led to a steep drop in the Palestinian economy. With workers unable to get into Israel, unemployment rose sharply, reaching as high as 50 percent in Gaza. The movement of goods between Israel and the territories, as well as between the West Bank and Gaza, was seriously disrupted, slowing exports and discouraging potential private investment.

The economic situation in the territories began to improve during the term of the Netanyahu government, as the steep fall in terrorist attacks led to a corresponding decrease in closures. Real GNP per capita grew by 3.5 percent in 1997, 7.7 percent in 1998, and 3.5 percent in 1999, while unemployment was more than halved. By the beginning of 1999, according to the World Bank, the West Bank and Gaza had fully recovered from the economic decline of the previous years.

Then, in still another turnabout, came Ehud Barak, who in the course of a dizzying six months in late 2000 and early 2001 offered Yasir Arafat a complete end to the Israeli presence, ceding virtually the entire West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the nascent Palestinian state together with some Israeli territory, and making breathtaking concessions over Israel's capital city of Jerusalem. To this, however, Arafat's response was war. Since its launch, the Palestinian campaign has inflicted thousands of brutal attacks on Israeli civilians—suicide bombings, drive-by shootings, stabbings, lynching, stonings—murdering more than 500 and wounding some 4,000.

In the entire two decades of Israeli occupation preceding the Oslo accords, some 400 Israelis were murdered; since the conclusion of that "peace" agreement, twice as many have lost their lives in terrorist attacks. If the occupation was the cause of terrorism, why was terrorism sparse during the years of actual occupation, why did it increase dramatically with the prospect of the end of the occupation, and why did it escalate into open war upon Israel's most far-reaching concessions ever? To the contrary, one might argue with far greater plausibility that the *absence* of occupation—that is, the withdrawal of close Israeli surveillance—is precisely what facilitated the launching of the terrorist war in the first place.

There are limits to Israel's ability to transform a virulent enemy into a peace partner, and those limits have long since been reached. To borrow from Baruch Spinoza, peace is not the absence of war but rather a state of mind: a disposition to benevolence, confidence, and justice. From the birth of the Zionist movement until today, that disposition has remained conspicuously absent from the mind of the Palestinian leadership.

It is not the 1967 occupation that led to the Palestinians' rejection of peaceful coexistence and their pursuit of violence. Palestinian terrorism started well before 1967, and continued—and intensified—after the occupation ended in all but name. Rather, what is at fault is the perduring Arab view that the creation of the Jewish state was itself an original act of "inhuman occupation" with which compromise of any final kind is beyond the realm of the possible. Until that disposition changes, which is to say until a different leadership arises, the idea of peace in the context of the Arab Middle East will continue to mean little more than the continuation of war by other means.

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OBSERVATIONS

Lifestyles of the Rich and Infertile

Lisa Schiffren

SHORTLY AFTER September 11, there began to appear an unusual number of paeans to family life—unusual, at least, for the more fashionable precincts of New York City. The editors, pundits, and publicists who set the tone in these matters let the rest of us know that the proper response to the great loss of life and security was a return to domestic pleasures, to the things that "really matter." "Lifestyle" articles extolled the comforts of entertaining at home and discussed the worries of "commitment-phobic" Man-hattan singles, so jolted by the terrorist attacks that they were seriously considering settling down. There was even talk that *Sex and the City*—HBO's iconic tribute to New York's fabulous, sexually liberated, professional single women—might have passed its moment.

Reading the "Portraits of Grief" in the *Times*—thumbnail sketches of the victims at the World Trade Center—New Yorkers could not help noticing that many of the men killed that day had left behind three or four children. While tragic for their widows and orphans, this was a meaningful legacy in a way that an impressive résumé, frequent-flier miles, and a closet full of Armani suits was not. In my own neighborhood, the famously child-centric (and commensurately dowdy) Upper West Side, parents these days seem deeply grateful to their children for keeping them focused on the demands of daily life. School, birthday parties, and family milestones beat worrying about what terrorists might yet have in store for the city.

With so much family-related anxiety in the air—and not just in New York—the moment could not have been better for Sylvia Ann Hewlett's new book, *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*.* The author of several previous books chronicling the clash between feminism and family life, Hewlett asserts that there is an "epidemic of childlessness" among today's professional women, especially the most accomplished of them. This is bad enough by itself, but worse, she argues, is that the women themselves are not really responsible for this outcome; they have been tricked, pressured, and cajoled, and have found themselves without offspring despite assuming all along that they would have them.

HEWLETT BEGINS by talking to nine women at the top of their professions—some of them famous, like Diane Sawyer and Wendy Wasserstein—and asking each of them how she ended up childless. Some seem bitter and regretful, but most simply recite the stages in their careers with an air of inevitability.

Lisa Polsky is typical of the group. After fifteen successful years in investment banking—and just as she turned forty—she was offered a position as a managing director at Bankers' Trust. "I knew it wasn't in me to turn it down," she tells Hewlett, "yet I also knew that if I took it I would never have a child. It would not be fair to the child. . . . I felt torn apart by the decision, but at the same time I felt robbed of any real choice in the matter."

Having a child was always something Polsky had imagined doing "in a year or so, after the next promotion, when I was more established."

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* Talk/Miramax, 334 pp., $22.00.

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In this, Hewlett writes, she is typical of the entire "breakthrough" generation—that is, the cohort of women who came of age during the 1970's and led the way in integrating the higher reaches of the labor force. According to the survey that forms the heart of this book, 33 percent of women who earn over $65,000 a year are still childless in their forties, and the portion rises to 42 percent for women who earn over $100,000 a year.

Even more worrisome, according to Hewlett, is that younger educated women are following suit. Like their elder sisters, they defer marriage largely because building a successful professional career demands a tremendous commitment of time during one's twenties and thirties; there is little opportunity to pursue and cultivate relationships. Even when married, they postpone childbearing until they earn their partnership at a law firm or hit similar career milestones.

Why do they put off having children for so long? Almost 90 percent of them, Hewlett reports, believe that they will remain fertile into their forties, and that, if they have problems then, new reproductive technology can overcome them. One by one they visit the OBGYN's who obligingly doled out their contraception for the past two decades only to learn that they have long since passed their reproductive prime—fertility peaks at twenty-seven, and the odds of a healthy birth drop to less than one in five after forty—and that the success rate for treating age-related infertility is very low indeed.

Hewlett herself had four children and then managed to have a fifth, at age fifty-one, thanks to four grueling years of infertility treatment. She understands the "pain and yearning" of these women, who are rich and powerful—or on track to becoming so—but barren. The sadness is compounded in her eyes by the fact that most of them did not set out be childless. None of these women, Hewlett writes, "sat down at age thirty and decided that motherhood wasn't for me." It was an unexpected, unintentional sacrifice, made during their climb to the top—what one of her subjects calls a "creeping nonchoice."

Hewlett holds a number of culprits responsible for this situation. There is the fertility industry, which promises more than it can deliver. There is the work culture of corporate America, which demands more time of professionals and managers than is strictly necessary for the execution of their work, a condition that takes a greater toll on young women than on young men. And there is American feminism, which demands equality and sexual freedom instead of the European-style, social-welfare measures (daycare, maternity leave, job guarantees, etc.) that would create "a level playing field" for women who want to combine work and family. Finally, Hewlett places some of the blame on American women themselves, who, she says, must become every bit as "intentional" about having children as they have become about setting up careers.

MUCH OF what we learn here is old hat, even for Sylvia Ann Hewlett. Her two previous books, *A Lesser Life* (1986) and *When the Bough Breaks* (1991), offered similar laments about the trade-offs that women face in trying to manage work and family, and about America's need to become more like Sweden.

What is new in Hewlett's current formulation is the idea of a fertility crisis—and it is what has made her book a media sensation (though also, thanks perhaps to its dour message, a sales flop). *Creating a Life* has been featured on the cover of *Time*, discussed in the book-review and op-ed pages of the major newspapers, and presented on all the big TV talk shows, including *Oprah* and *60 Minutes*. It prompted *New York* magazine to declare "Baby Panic" on its cover, inspired *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd to new heights of solipsistic inanity, and seemingly drew the attention of every woman who has ever penned a thought about the gender wars, the mommy wars, feminism, or antifeminism, plus anyone who ever had a baby or decided not to have a baby, each making her point by drawing freely on her own dating history and reproductive career.

The book broke through the media blare because actual infertility is a problem that is still treated with great discretion among elite women. Not only is it a deeply personal sorrow, but the problem lies in dangerous proximity to their wider ambitions. In the institutions that groom the professional and managerial class, it remains taboo to calculate the possible costs to women of emulating a male career path. Women who raise the issue are immediately seen as lacking seriousness.

What Hewlett has pointed out with painful clarity is that female fertility is a limited, diminishing resource. The option to have one's own babies without massive intervention, cost, and the high risk of failure is highly circumscribed by time. Women who really want children must marry and get on with things in their twenties and mid-thirties. Obscuring this reality—as the fertility industry certainty has done, with the complicity of its feminist boosters—has undoubtedly resulted in a great disservice to women.

But can it really be, as Hewlett suggests, that today's educated American women—the most privileged generation of women in the history of the world—have played so passive a role in their own childlessness? Hewlett measures her subjects' "real intentions" by asking them whether, when they graduated from college, they *knew* they did not want to have children. Though just 14 percent said yes, 33 percent nevertheless ended up without them. For Hewlett, this is a clear sign that women have been the victims of "unfairness."

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Indeed, Hewlett is quick to describe any ambivalence or second thoughts that women might have about forgoing children as a tragic "nonchoice." But perhaps they just changed their minds as they grew to understand the demands of their professions. Whatever the regrets of someone like Lisa Polsky, the investment banker, she clearly knew what was most important to her: at each stage in her career, she put off children in favor of work. The fact is that she has been hugely successful, earning millions of dollars a year in a high-pressure, high-reward job. Her sacrifices have not been so different from those of her male colleagues, who, if they have children, probably do not get to see much of them.

Other women, faced with similar options, go the other way. At a neighborhood park, I recently encountered the mother of one my children's classmates. A Harvard-educated partner in a law firm, she told me that she was cutting back her work still further, to just fifteen hours a week. "I'm going to be so marginal I bet they'll just fire me, or maybe I'll end up quitting," she said. She had worked hard for the partnership, but now she wanted to be home. In the face of competing goods, she could not bring herself to make a direct decision, so she was doing it incrementally.

For the women of my generation—I graduated in 1982 from Bryn Mawr, an institution that has long prided itself on sending women into the professions—the need to make real compromises came, oddly enough, as news. In college, no one ever mentioned marriage, even as we received much advice about our presumed careers. The accepted hypothesis was that work was what gave your life meaning, and therefore should be pursued aggressively; everything else was just a matter of taste, and would somehow "fall into place." On a campus where traditional moral or religious guidance was conspicuously lacking, the more impressionable among us absorbed these ideas without much thought.

Still, though they would have sooner died than say so, some of my college friends knew that having a family was *their* priority, and that it would mean taking a different path. They found jobs, even went to graduate school, but they did not make big career plans. While the rest of us pursued more "serious" goals and less serious relationships, they made themselves attractive and accessible. Before long they were inviting us to be their bridesmaids, all the while claiming that things had just happened that way, and would for us too. In those years, we believed them—even as we looked down at them for "wasting their potential."

By the time we hit thirty, of course, the shoes had changed feet, as the unmarried among us began to worry that we would never find a husband, or have cute little toddlers of our own, and as those vaunted careers of ours began to seem a bit empty. The lucky ones were able to re-evaluate their choices, find jobs that did not preclude a social life, and make sometimes painful efforts to meet potential mates. Among my own acquaintances, those who did this early enough tended to get what they wanted. More than a few of them missed the boat—and felt cheated.

But were they victims? They would certainly have been better served by an education, and a culture, that hammered home the inescapability of costs and trade-offs. But they would have had to be willfully blind if, a few years into their careers, they did not understand just how difficult it was to get to the top, or see how the people who were there—women and men—actually lived.

SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT's great contribution is to have brought the ambient "go-for-it-like-a-man" feminism, whose influences pervade the thinking of nearly all educated American women, up against the limits of reproductive biology. As she—and anyone who has had occasion to hear the stories of disappointed friends—knows, too many women past their childbearing prime have gone through the devastating experience of in-vitro fertilization and other techniques only to end up without the child they wanted. Still more have had one, but not the two or three they planned. *Creating a Life* will do genuine good if it reaches just some fraction of those deluded young women who are counting on making babies in their forties.

Still, Hewlett too remains a feminist in the end, and so she must point to the possibility of escaping the limits she so ably describes. If only we were to arrange society more justly, she suggests—a subsidy here, a regulation there, some new attitudes all around—women would be able to have everything: work would bring fulfillment, families would prosper, and all would be well.

Some conflicts may indeed be solved or at least seriously ameliorated in this way—with money, new technology, a changed mindset. But the conflict between family and work is not one of them; it is simply a part of the human condition. As long as there are only 24 hours in a day, taking care of one's family will clash with serious professional ambition. The sooner that fact is recognized, the better equipped young women will be to make the choices that best suit their temperaments and aims. Some will give up children in order to make millions; some, in the time-tested way, will give up work for children. Others—the great majority—will try to strike the best balance they can, either simultaneously or sequentially.

To pretend, however, that these are not the basic options—to pretend that women can have everything and sacrifice nothing—is a recipe for widespread misery. As Hewlett so strikingly demonstrates, even those who refuse to choose know, at some level, that they have made a choice.

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OBSERVATIONS

Cheering "Metamorphoses"

William Meyers

IN LONDON, theatergoers who have become weary with the leftish works of Harold Pinter, Cheryl Churchill, David Hare, and their like can often turn to Tom Stoppard for relief. That option is usually unavailable in New York, where the cultural perspective is, if anything, even more depressingly narrow. But this past season has offered an exception.

Metamorphoses, written and directed by Mary Zimmerman, and still playing at the Circle in the Square, an off-Broadway theater in the Times Square area, has given New Yorkers an alternative. Not only does this work vary the American theater's customary viewpoint, but it puts its audience in touch with some of the deepest resources of Western civilization. Little else in the neighborhood even tries.

"I ask the help of the gods," the first "narrator" of *Metamorphoses* begins. "Let me speak, better than I know how." For the next 94 minutes, ten stories adapted by Zimmerman from the *Metamorphoses* of the Roman poet Ovid (43 B.C.E.-17 C.E.) are presented for our contemplation and delight—tales of men and women, gods and goddesses, birds, animals, flowers, trees and, not incidentally, the cosmos. Some of the stories, like Orpheus' failed attempt to rescue his beloved Eurydice from Hades, or Phaeton's smash-up in his father Apollo's sun-chariot, are fairly familiar even today. Others, such as the tale of Erysichthon, who is cursed by Ceres with a hunger so intense he ends up consuming his own body, are less so. Familiar or not, they are, deservedly, a smash hit in New York as they were in earlier productions in Chicago, Seattle, Berkeley, and Los Angeles.

Zimmerman, forty-one, and the winner of a 2002 Tony award for her direction of *Metamorphoses*, has a reputation as one of the country's most promising playwrights and directors, with devoted audiences in the cities where her works are regularly seen. These include such adaptations as *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, *Arabian Nights*, *The Odyssey*, and *Journey to the West*, taken from a 16th-century Chinese-Buddhist epic. Her productions make use of the story-theater techniques developed at Northwestern University by Robert Breen and Frank Galati, the latter of whom was Zimmerman's teacher, as well as other, familiar devices of modernist theater. What distinguishes their use in *Metamorphoses* is Zimmerman's sure-footedness, and the ends to which she puts those techniques—ends that are different both from those of the commercial theater and from most of what passes for "serious" drama.

Almost the entire playing area of *Metamorphoses* consists of a shallow 27-foot pool filled with water and surrounded by a narrow walkway. The actors float, splash, drown, stomp, and wade in the water, which thus serves as both set and prop. As startling as the pool appears when one first enters the theater, it is not a gimmick, and by the end of the performance it seems entirely appropriate. Of course, the psychological and literary significance of water is well known; but for Zimmerman, the water (like the lighting) is also an expressive element that deepens the meaning of the stories themselves. In one, for instance,

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a ship we see in miniature embarking on calm seas later flounders in a tempest after it has "reached the point of no return, with as much blue water astern as remained ahead."

The stories themselves are told by an ensemble of ten actors, each of whom slips in and out of multiple roles, sometimes performing as a character, sometimes describing in the third person what his character is doing, sometimes standing outside the action and serving as a narrator. The costumes are mostly based on our notions of what ancient Greek and other archaic peoples wore, although—since the stories are timeless—some are more contemporary. Thus, Phaeton wears bright yellow swim-trunks as he floats on a bright yellow inflated air mattress and adjusts his Ray-Bans while explaining to his analyst the difficulties he has had with the sun as his father; his psychobabble-spouting female shrink wears a stylish black pant suit.

MUCH OF what is wonderful about *Metamorphoses* lies in what it is not. The very first metamorphosis, told as a prologue, concerns the creation of the world from chaos, when "nature was all the same." It takes a god—Zeus—to create the order out of which the sun and moon, land and sea, are put in their proper places; but in this "paradise," as the god himself declares, "one thing was lacking: words." And so "man was born, he was born that he might talk." But what kind of talk? Zimmerman's script honors the responsibility of words to complete the world, and her cast respects those words by speaking them clearly and with precise intentions. Unlike in much new theater, there is no smut, no one is mush-mouthed, and dialogue is not wallpaper.

Nor is *Metamorphoses* "transgressive," although that is not for lack of material. In one story, the virgin Myrrha is punished for having ignored Aphrodite by being seized with a passion for her own father, Cinyras. She debates with herself what to do: "O gods, I pray you, keep me decent," but then, alternately, "Devotion cannot condemn such love as crime." Finally, enlisting the aid of her old nursemaid, she goes to Cinyras' bedroom at night while her mother is away and he has been blindfolded. But after several nights of terrific sex, he insists on seeing her. His instinct, as soon as he takes off the blindfold, is to kill his daughter. She flees, crying: "Gods, I pray you, change me; make me something else, transform me entirely; let me step out of my own heart." Several possible endings of the story are given, but the one we are left with is that Myrrha dissolves into tears: she steps into a shimmering stream and "her body melted." In Zimmerman's staging, the actress slowly disappears beneath the surface of the pool.

A tale, then, of transgression, but not in the least transgressive. The characters, the narrator, Zimmerman, the audience—all know that what Myrrha and Cinyras did cannot be allowed and must be punished. That Aphrodite is cruel in afflicting Myrrha says something about the nature of passionate love—which the Greeks considered a disease that robbed one of reason and self-control—but in no way exculpates its unfortunate bearer. That is tough, but if Myrrha were to be excused because she is a "victim," she would lose her dignity and her right to our respect. She chose, and she chose wrong. As we are reminded again and again in *Metamorphoses*, the reason the ancient myths and the classic fairytales are part of our culture is that they look at life unblinkered.

TO APPRECIATE the pitfalls Zimmerman has triumphantly avoided in this play, it might help to digress for a moment and consider another recent play that happens to be based on an ancient text: Charles Mee's *True Love*. Mee, a historian who knows the Greek plays well, has said that he likes to take a classic text, "smash it to ruins, and then atop its ruined structure . . . write a new play." He is a considerable figure in magazines devoted to new drama, and *True Love*'s New York production got much favorable press from critics who favor edgy, avant-garde, postmodern, transgressive art, although it lasted only a little while after its opening. (And it was a small theater.)

True Love is based on *Hippolytus*, Euripedes' version of the myth in which, like Myrrha, the youth Hippolytus disregards Aphrodite. He is punished by having his stepmother Phaedra fall in love with him. To Theseus, his father, Phaedra then asserts that the boy was trying to seduce her, and when Theseus prays to Poseidon to punish him, Hippolytus is destroyed.

"Relations," Mee has written, "are twisted. Any form of love is true because it's the only kind of love they—the characters—are capable of." One would like to know exactly what Mee means by "true," but on the evidence of *True Love* he probably means something like "okay."

Hippolytus is given a contemporary setting in a grungy auto-repair garage with an old-model Dodge on stage. Characters come and go—Hippolytus is on a skateboard—and there is a live rock band on stage, a device first seen 40-odd years ago in the Living Theater production of Jack Gelber's *The Connection*. Since the plot has been pretty well smashed to incomprehensibility, what the characters mainly do is sit around the garage and talk. Much of this talk is funny, but nearly all of it is about what they variously call "sex" or "love." Their case histories are grotesque and thus, in the end, sentimental. (One of the characters shows us how he gets off by attaching jumper cables from the battery of the Dodge to his genitals.)

Mee tries very hard to get us to like these people and to approve of their romantic expedients. Resort-

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ing to audience participation, a convention of modern theater, he gives us one character whose form of sexual expression is to have someone smash a pie in his face and then another pie in his groin. At one point this character comes off the stage, picks a member of the audience to go back with him, and after some ad-libbed business gets himself pied. The ensuing laughter and applause ratify the audience's complicity in the character's kinky sex: we are all transgressive now.

A neat trick, but a cheap one. What if the member of the audience had been asked to do something more clearly sexual—to share a French kiss, or to have his or her genitals touched? There is something disingenuous about trying to get approbation for the perverse in this way. Like so much else in the arts today, Mee's work is "interesting" without being in the least convincing.

MARY ZIMMERMAN would also seem to be at odds with Tony Kushner, the author of *Angels in America*, who believes that "What's wrong with the way we do theater in general [is] . . . not enough politics." (That may be why Kushner's plays are so tedious.) In *Metamorphoses*, there is no politicking, no hectoring; there are no causes. The very first story we are told is that of King Midas. In the hands of any neo-Brechtian, he would certainly be used to illustrate the evils of contemporary capitalism. Instead, when he arrives on Zimmerman's stage dressed as a 19th-century plutocrat and lets us know that "money is a good thing," we learn that wealth is an indispensable part of his story, but it is his story as an individual that compels our attention.

The segment ends when Midas's young daughter unknowingly jumps on him to give him a hug and turns to gold. As her rigid body falls to earth, Midas, who had chided her for annoying him with her games, is no longer a king—"net worth: 100 billion"—but a father, crushed. The tone, playful until the moment the girl leaps, turns instantly tragic, and the audience shudders. Midas's fate is not a political reckoning; he had been forewarned when he asked the god Bacchus to grant him his wish ("That's a really, really bad idea," says Bacchus), and he suffers for it. But the innocent daughter suffers, too. Once again, although the story is literally fabulous, we feel unmistakably that this is how life is.

The absence of ideological politics means that Zimmerman is also not intimidated by the demands of contemporary feminism. In one of the ten stories, Vertumnus disguises himself as an old woman so he can continue his wooing of Pomona by assuring her that "A lover is what you need to make yourself complete as a woman." Although the narrator informs us that "None of this was working," neither does the remark make the self-possessed Pomona indignant. She knows who is in the wig and dress, and accepts it for the male "line" that it is; the wooing continues to its successful conclusion.

In still another story, Psyche disobeys Eros's instructions not to look at him, and drops some hot wax from her candle on him as he sleeps. He punishes her.

Q: What's going to happen to her now?
A: She's going to suffer.
Q: And?
A: She's going to suffer.
Q: And?
A: She's going to suffer.

Psyche does suffer, but in the end she is rewarded for her endurance by being made immortal. Her marriage to Eros, we are assured, "will last forever."

BECAUSE SHE is willing to put herself at the service of her material, Zimmerman gets her stories right. Her work is spare and simple, frequently playful, but at the end of each tale, when a transformation takes place, it is not just the brilliant stagecraft or the actors' technique that makes the audience respond. What elicits consent, what makes the work "click," is the felt rightness of the outcome, which is another way of saying that the weight of the culture is behind it.

When *Metamorphoses* opened in New York shortly after the World Trade Center attack, audiences responded with open emotion to the way it confronted the ineluctable. One of the things Mohammed Atta and his crew demolished on September 11 was a lot of relativist cant, and it may be that, in the aftermath, New Yorkers were better able to hear this work that came to them from the core of a culture they now knew they needed. They took it as balm. Even today, nothing one sees happening on Zimmerman's stage is any more unbelievable than that the World Trade Center should have been metamorphosed from twin towers of steel and glass to two insubstantial beams of light.

In the last of the tales, the elderly couple Baucis and Philemon are granted a wish because of their hospitality to the gods. They wish that, since they have loved each other their entire lives, they will die at the same moment. When the moment comes, they embrace, sprout leaves and bark, and are turned into trees. As this is happening in the middle of the pool, the rest of the cast surrounds them and whispers.

All: Let me die the moment my love dies.
Narrator: They whisper:
All: Let me not outlive my own capacity to love.
Narrator: They whisper:
All: Let me die still loving, and so, never die.

Reciting these lines, the cast launches glass vessels with lit candles in them that float on the water. The lights come down.

It is a beautiful moment, this transformation out of the human condition; but it is also not quite the last. At the end of the Midas episode that has begun the performance, af-

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ter his daughter has been turned to gold, Midas pleads to have his wish removed. Bacchus says he cannot do that, but that Midas should "walk as far as the ends of the earth and search there for a pool of water that holds the stars at night. Wash . . . in it, and there is a chance that everything will be restored." Now, as the lights dim on the Baucis and Philemon episode and the candles float in the darkening pool, a distracted Midas wanders on, still carrying his daughter's golden jumprope.

Midas kneels at the end of the pool, drops the rope in the water, and dips his hands to wash his face. At that moment his daughter appears, restored. For Zimmerman, for Ovid, for the ancient crones who first told this story around a fire, the final transformation is not out of the human condition but when we are made human.

MUSIC

Toscanini Lives

Terry Teachout

ARTURO TOSCANINI was the most admired of 20th-century conductors—and, in certain circles, the most reviled.

Throughout the first half of his seven-decade-long career, Toscanini was spoken and written of in near-worshipful tones, not merely by critics and the public but also by most of his fellow musicians. In 1938, Bernard Shore, principal violist of the BBC Symphony, called him "the one living conductor whom every single member of the orchestra approves." Even other conductors—hardly a collegial breed—seemed to view him less as a peer than as a phenomenon. Here, for instance, is Herbert von Karajan's memory of hearing him conduct Verdi's *Falstaff* in Vienna in 1929: "From the first bar, it was as if I had been struck a blow. I was completely disconcerted by the perfection which had been achieved."

Starting in the late 1930's, however, a note of skepticism began to creep into the appraisals of influential music critics, foremost among them Virgil Thomson of the *New York Herald Tribune*. Decrying Toscanini's apparent lack of interest in 20th-century music, these writers also claimed that his interpretations of the classics were too fast and too unyielding. Some went so far as to contend that Toscanini, far from being a uniquely gifted interpreter, was in fact a shallow crowd-pleaser whose flashy, superficial style was (in Thomson's words) "very little dependent on literary culture and historical knowledge. . . . I find Toscanini's work, for the most part, spiritually unenlightening, except when he plays Italian music."

Over time, the two viewpoints hardened into something resembling ideologies. To his most doctrinaire admirers, Toscanini was a genius who could do no wrong; to his most extreme detractors, he was a kind of idiot savant, capable of forcing orchestras to play with matchless virtuosity but unable to grasp the inner meaning of the 19th-century Austro-German classics.

That this controversy should continue to rage is a tribute to Toscanini's extraordinary charisma, as well as to the fact that he lived long enough to make an unusually large number of recordings. Born in 1867, he remained active until 1954, and for the last sixteen years of his life he performed on radio with the NBC Symphony Orchestra, whose broadcasts were all recorded and have been preserved. In addition, he made commercial recordings for RCA Victor not only of most of his symphonic repertoire but of six complete operas, and he also appeared ten times on TV. All of his commercial recordings have been transferred to CD, and all of his televised concerts are available on videocassette.[1]

Yet this huge corpus of material

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[1] Recommended CD's by Toscanini are listed in the discography at the end of this piece.

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has attracted little attention from musicologists, while professional critics who generalize about Toscanini's style, as Joseph Horowitz did in his controversial *Understanding Toscanini: How He Became an American Culture-God and Helped Create a New Audience for Old Music* (1987), tend to do so on the basis of only a tiny sliver of the available evidence. Significantly, the only factually reliable biography of the conductor, Harvey Sachs's *Toscanini* (1978), was written not by an academic scholar but by a conductor turned journalist.

In recent months, though, two books have appeared that add greatly to our knowledge of Toscanini and his work. Mortimer H. Frank, who served as curator of the Toscanini archive at Wave Hill, the conductor's New York home from 1941 to 1945, has published an exhaustive study of Toscanini at NBC—the first such book to be written by someone who has listened closely to all of his surviving broadcast recordings.[2] And Harvey Sachs has edited a collection of 700 Toscanini letters, most of which were unavailable when he wrote his biography a quarter-century ago.[3] Thanks in part to these groundbreaking books, it has become possible to steer around the roadblock of Toscanini's legend—in both its favorable and unfavorable versions—and consider the man himself.

The legend began in 1886 when Toscanini, then the principal cellist and assistant chorus master of an Italian opera troupe on tour in South America, made his debut by leading a performance of *Aida* in Rio de Janeiro. Though he was only nineteen years old and had never before conducted an orchestra of any kind, he brought off the feat triumphantly. Within a few years of his return to Italy, Toscanini was recognized as one of that country's most promising young conductors; by 1896 he had led the premieres of Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* and Puccini's *La Bohème*, and two years later he became principal conductor of Milan's Teatro La Scala, then as now one of the world's leading opera houses.

The hot-blooded, high-handed Toscanini struck most of his friends and colleagues as quintessentially Italian, an impression reinforced over the years by his volatile correspondence (not least his love letters). Yet it was in the highest degree improbable that such a musician should have emerged from the chaotic, provincial musical culture of a country that valued singing above all other musical endeavors. Except for Puccini, Italy would produce no major composers during the 20th century, and only a bare handful of world-class instrumental soloists and ensembles. Even the best Italian orchestras were undisciplined, and it was taken for granted that opera productions existed solely to showcase the voices of native-born singers.

Toscanini had different ideas. He led the first Italian productions of such works as Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Strauss's *Salome*, Tchaikovsky's *Yevgeny Onegin*, and Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* and *Siegfried*, all of which made radically new expressive and technical demands on singers and orchestras alike. Not only was he determined to bring Italian musicianship up to the standards set by such operas, he also took the closest possible interest in the way they were staged. Influenced by Richard Wagner's theories of opera as drama, he sought to replace the traditional, singer-dominated approach to production with a new style in which the conductor was responsible for all artistic decisions. As Herbert von Karajan recalled:

> To be sure, Toscanini had employed a stage director; but basically, the essential conception came from him. The agreement between the music and the stage performance was something totally inconceivable for us: instead of people senselessly standing around, here everything had its place and its purpose. . . . For the first time I grasped what "direction" meant.

To have done this anywhere in the world would have won Toscanini a permanent place in the history of classical music. To have done it in the opera houses of Italy, whose slapdash practices were antithetical to his quest for perfection, is all but unimaginable, and goes a long way toward explaining why to this day his name is identified with tyrannical behavior. Single-minded to the point of fanaticism, he threw spectacular and terrifying fits whenever he suspected that his musicians were failing to give their best. According to Harvey Sachs, "he would break batons, scream obscenities, tear up scores, throw music stands into the empty auditorium, and hurl insults at principal offenders." Some of these tantrums were recorded without Toscanini's knowledge by NBC engineers, proving that rumors of his temper were in no way exaggerated.

For all Toscanini's gifts as a man of the theater, it was his conducting—and, no less important, his ability to train orchestras—that made the deepest impression on his contemporaries. Even in the largest cities of Europe, standards of playing were extremely uneven well into the 1920's and beyond. London, for instance, did not have a single world-class orchestra until the BBC Symphony was founded in 1930. Before Toscanini came along, most of the great conductors had been composers like Wagner, Hector Berlioz, and Richard Strauss—men whose works were so innovative that they took up conducting in order to show orchestras how to play them.

Toscanini, by contrast, was a full-time conductor who worked regularly with a limited number of orchestras, teaching them how to play the new music of the late 19th century and painstakingly sculpting them into true virtuoso ensembles capable of performing with un-

[2] *Arturo Toscanini: The NBC Years.* Amadeus Press, 358 pp., $29.95.

[3] *The Letters of Arturo Toscanini.* Knopf, 468 pp., $35.00.

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precedented brilliance. Other men, most notably Willem Mengelberg, Arthur Nikisch, and Felix Weingartner, were doing more or less the same thing at the same time, but it was Toscanini who by most accounts was primus inter pares, first at La Scala, then in New York, where he served as principal conductor of the Metropolitan Opera from 1908 to 1915.

In those days, no one was skeptical about Arturo Toscanini, least of all his colleagues. Told by a musician that Toscanini's interpretation of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was unidiomatic, the violin virtuoso Fritz Kreisler replied, "I don't believe Toscanini is wrong; but even if he were, I should rather hear it wrongly played by Toscanini than correctly by anyone else." Otto Klemperer called him "the king of conductors," while for Pierre Monteux he was "the greatest of all."

Had he died young, these words would have been remembered though not necessarily believed. But in 1929, two years after he became co-conductor with Mengelberg of the New York Philharmonic, Toscanini began to record the major works in his repertoire, making it possible for those who never heard him live to understand why he was remembered so vividly by those who did.

The first thing one notices upon listening to Toscanini's early recordings is the lean, focused sound he draws from the Philharmonic. To some extent, this is a matter of mere precision—he demanded and got tighter ensemble playing than any other conductor—but it also represents a conscious aesthetic preference. Toscanini favored a bright, "Italianate" sound, weighted more toward treble than bass (as opposed to the bottom-heavy tone preferred by many Austro-German conductors). Some critics have accused him of being a "top-line" conductor, interested only in melody, but this is very nearly the opposite of the truth. What he sought, rather, was a *transparent* sound, one in which the inner voices of a piece were as audible as the soprano and bass lines.

Another generalization about Toscanini that cannot stand up to even the most casual scrutiny is that he played most pieces too quickly. To be sure, he did take certain works or passages, including the slow movements of Beethoven's Seventh and Schubert's C Major Symphonies, faster than most other conductors. Just as often, though, the apparent "speed" of a Toscanini interpretation is an illusion arising from clarity and rhythmic tautness. In any case, as Mortimer Frank proves in his detailed study of the NBC Symphony broadcasts, Toscanini's interpretations varied over time, often quite widely. It is wrong to assume that a single recording, however impressive (or wrongheaded) it may seem on first hearing, necessarily shows how he thought a piece should "go."

When Toscanini erred, it was on the side of rhythmic inflexibility. This is a trait more evident in his later recordings, which contain fewer of the sometimes startling inflections of tempo heard in his performances from the 1920's and 1930's. Yet even here, as Frank explains, we are dealing with the defect of a virtue:

> This is not to say that his performances grew increasingly fleet, metronomic, or slack. But his rubato became less obvious. It may be this change in style that has promoted the inaccurate notion that Toscanini's tempos accelerated and his performances became less subtle as he grew older. Nuance and subtlety, more often than not, remained, but more careful listening was required to discern them.

Early or late, Toscanini was always a dramatic conductor—a man of the theater even in the concert hall. To be sure, he was also capable of drawing exquisitely sensitive sounds from an orchestra (he was one of Debussy's earliest advocates outside of France), but it is as the passionately unsentimental interpreter of such direct and forceful works as Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony that he is best remembered, and not without reason.

IN HIS private life no less than in his musical life, Toscanini was a man of unequivocal views. After a brief flirtation with fascism, he became known throughout the world as a committed opponent of totalitarianism in all its forms, and his unwillingness to compromise with Mussolini and Hitler would have a major effect on the course of his later career.

Exhausted by the insurmountable difficulties of producing opera in Italy, Toscanini parted company with La Scala in 1929 and decided to concentrate on symphonic conducting in New York and Europe. Two years later, he was attacked by a mob of fascists in Bologna, and vowed never again to conduct in Italy so long as Mussolini was its ruler; in 1933, shortly after Hitler came to power in Germany, he broke with the Bayreuth Festival as well. From then on, he limited his European appearances to concerts with the BBC Symphony and the Vienna Philharmonic, taking time out to help organize the orchestra now known as the Israel Philharmonic.

Toscanini resigned from the New York Philharmonic in 1936, believing that he was too old to work regularly with a symphony orchestra. The following year, the NBC radio network offered to organize a studio orchestra with which he could broadcast and record as often as he wished, and the NBC Symphony was born. With Hitler's *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, it became clear that he could no longer safely remain in Europe, and in that same year he moved permanently to New York. Save for a limited number of appearances with other American orchestras and a handful of European concerts after the war, he spent the rest of his working life at NBC.

The NBC Symphony broadcast

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from Studio 8-H, a small, unresonant auditorium in New York's Rockefeller Center that lacked the bloom of a true concert hall. In part because of the dry acoustics, the orchestra tended to sound brassy and blatant, but in 1950 it moved to Carnegie Hall and over time developed a warmer, better-blended tone. Between 1938 and 1954, Toscanini recorded most of his repertoire with the NBC Symphony, including the complete symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms and dozens of other pieces by composers ranging from Haydn and Mozart to Samuel Barber and George Gershwin. Many were recorded during live broadcasts.

These performances solidified Toscanini's reputation as the world's most famous conductor. They came to an end in 1954 after he had begun to experience occasional memory lapses on the podium; recognizing that his powers were failing, he reluctantly resigned his post. His final broadcast, an all-Wagner program, was a disaster—he became disoriented midway through the next-to-last piece and briefly stopped conducting—and he never again appeared in public, dying three years later.

A HALF-CENTURY after his last concert, Arturo Toscanini remains an enduring symbol of classical music in the 20th century. Thanks to persistent demand, RCA has kept his recordings in print, and smaller labels issue and reissue "pirated" versions of his live performances.

Yet, beyond a general agreement that he played a key role in raising standards of orchestral performance, there is still no consensus on his historical significance. Indeed, many critics continue to regard his influence as chiefly negative, while others, like Mortimer Frank, reject that view:

> Too young to have a memory of the NBC Symphony, some writers, by ignoring verifiable truth, have alleged that those broadcasts pandered to commercialism and that Toscanini was an anti-intellectual obsessed with speed, whose reputation was derived from a cult of older critics blind to his many shortcomings. These critics, it has been claimed, like the NBC network itself, promoted the conductor with unprecedented hype. All such claims comprise, at best, misleading half-truths and, at worst, outright falsehoods.

By and large, Frank is correct. It is true that the NBC Symphony was a commercial undertaking, and that the network promoted Toscanini's broadcasts and recordings heavily. But to look at the complete roster of its public performances included in *Arturo Toscanini: The NBC Years* is to be struck by just how high-minded an enterprise the NBC Symphony was. Throughout its seventeen-year life, the orchestra performed under such noted conductors as Ernest Ansermet, Leonard Bernstein, Adrian Boult, Guido Cantelli, Erich Kleiber, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Pierre Monteux, Eugene Ormandy, Leopold Stokowski, George Szell, and Bruno Walter. And though Toscanini himself performed comparatively little modern music—the chief complaint of his critics—the lack was made up for by these other conductors, whose programs included, among many other 20th-century pieces, such "difficult" works as the Berg Violin Concerto and the Schoenberg Piano Concerto.

Equally unconvincing is Joseph Horowitz's argument that Toscanini was an uncultured purveyor of slick performances of the classics that in some mysterious manner embodied the bourgeois obsessions of American middlebrow culture. "He did not so much discard tradition as disdain ever acquiring it," wrote Horowitz. "Toscanini's redundant Beethoven and Weber, Dvorák and Elgar, were as instantly and effortlessly preoccupying as a drawn six-shooter at the movies or a three-and-two count, bases loaded, at the ballpark."

Toscanini's letters show, to the contrary, that while he may not have been "intellectual" in the narrowly German sense, he was nonetheless an artist of high intelligence and considerable cultural awareness. While one may disagree with his unfavorable appraisal of, say, the music of Mahler, it cannot be dismissed as the mere whim of a boor.[4] In addition, *The Letters of Arturo Toscanini* reminds us that the inspired interpreter who made such thrilling recordings of the music of Beethoven and Wagner was also a man of flesh and blood. To put it another way, Toscanini's passionate art was a direct reflection of his passionate personality, which has heretofore seemed somewhat opaque, even in the pages of Sachs's excellent biography or the wonderfully vivid memoirs collected in B.H. Haggin's *The Toscanini Musicians Knew* (1967).

Here, for example, is Toscanini writing to his mistress in 1937 about the slow movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony:

> *The Adagio!* Elysian Fields, Paradise—I feel what is inexpressible. It lifts me off the earth, removes me from the field of gravity, makes me weightless; one becomes *all soul*. One ought to conduct it on one's *knees*. . . . Do you know that at the modulation to E-flat I always conduct with my eyes closed? I see extremely bright lights far, far away; I see shadows moving around, penetrated by rays that make them even move disembodied; I see flowers of the most charming shapes and colors. And the very music I'm conducting seems to descend from up there—I don't know where!

One would not want to be without this wonderful passage, or an-

[4] "Mahler," wrote Toscanini, "is not a genuine artist. His music has neither personality nor genius. It is a mixture of an Italianate style à la Petrella or Leoncavallo, coupled with Tchaikovsky's musical and instrumental bombast and a search for Straussian eccentricities—although boasting an opposing system—without having the brilliance of the last two."

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other from a 1939 letter in which Toscanini compares himself with Verdi: "Always marvelously honest, in art as in life, Giuseppe Verdi. Something of his character, not of his genius, lives in me." Reading these words, one recalls Isaiah Berlin's description of Verdi as "a craftsman of genius with the simple strong moral ideas of his time and place—no tragic self-torment. He was a marvelous composer, a divine genius who created in a natural way as Homer and Shakespeare and perhaps Goethe did."

Toscanini would never have said such things of himself: he drew a bright line between the genius of the creative artist and the lesser gifts of the interpreter. But he rightly sensed that he shared with Verdi the same sort of divine simplicity, and the best of his recordings leave no doubt of it. It is not necessary to dismiss the different approaches of other conductors in order to feel, while listening to him, that Arturo Toscanini really was, as Pierre Monteux averred, the greatest of all.

Arturo Toscanini on CD: An Introduction

NEARLY ALL of Toscanini's commercial recordings are currently available on CD in excellent-sounding digitally remastered transfers.[5] Here are ten of the best, listed chronologically by date of recording. Except as indicated, all performances feature the NBC Symphony:

1929-36: Toscanini recorded a delightfully fleet performance of Haydn's "Clock" Symphony at his first RCA sessions with the New York Philharmonic. The coupling on CD is Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, performed with the Philharmonic seven years later and widely regarded by connoisseurs as his single greatest achievement on disc (RCA Victor Gold Seal 60316-2-RG).[6]

1939: The rhythmic freedom of Toscanini's earlier conducting—as well as the fiery abandon of the then-new, still-youthful NBC Symphony—can be heard in a broadcast performance of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony recorded live in Studio 8-H (60269-2-RG).

1941: Toscanini's idiosyncratic interpretation of the Schubert C Major Symphony is best captured in the sonically flawed but nonetheless listenable recording he made with the Philadelphia Orchestra (60313-2-RG).

1947: Toscanini's interpretation of Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette*, whose love scene he called "the most beautiful music in the world," is not only compelling in its own right but a key document in the history of modern Berlioz performance (RCA 60274-2-RG, two CD's).

1947: Toscanini had played cello at the world premiere of *Otello*, and his live recording of Verdi's next-to-last opera is universally regarded—even by his most severe critics—as definitive (RCA 60302-2-RG, two CD's).

1949: The canard that Toscanini played German music "too fast" is put to rest by his unusually slow recording of the prelude to the first act of *Parsifal*, coupled on CD with six other Wagner excerpts (RCA 09026-60305-2).

1950: Toscanini's second studio recording of Debussy's *La Mer*, taped at the end of a transcontinental tour by the NBC Symphony, preserves one of his most celebrated interpretations, featuring several instrumental retouchings for which he scrupulously obtained the composer's approval. It is currently available as part of a set of French orchestral music (RCA 74321-66924-2, two CD's).

1951: Of all Toscanini's studio recordings, my own favorite is the Brahms Fourth Symphony, a fervent yet disciplined interpretation included in a set of the complete Brahms symphonies (RCA 74321-55838, two CD's).

1951: Toscanini's ability to combine exhilarating virtuosity with interpretative rigor was never displayed more effectively than in his studio version of Strauss's *Don Juan* (RCA 09026-60296-2).

1953: Even at the very end of his life, the eighty-five-year-old Toscanini was capable of conducting Dvorák's "New World" Symphony with the vitality and panache of a much younger man (RCA 74321-59481-2, two CD's).

These CD's can all be purchased on line by viewing this article during July and August on COMMENTARY's website:
www.commentarymagazine.com

[5] In addition, *Arturo Toscanini: The NBC Years* offers a detailed listing of live radio broadcasts by Toscanini and the NBC Symphony that have been "unofficially" released by independent labels. Many are hard to find or not for sale in the U.S., and their sound quality is inconsistent. For readers interested in exploring this material, one CD that is both sonically acceptable and readily available is a collection of seven Rossini overtures recorded between 1938 and 1951 (Relief CR 1884). These performances are for the most part superior to Toscanini's commercial recordings of the same works.

[6] Another transfer of the Seventh Symphony, available as part of a set of Toscanini's complete recordings with the New York Philharmonic, makes use of a slower alternate take of the introduction to the first movement—a fascinating example of how his interpretations varied from performance to performance (Pearl GEMM CDS 9373, three CD's).

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Books in Review

Peerless

Dostoevsky:
The Mantle of the
Prophet, 1871-1881
by Joseph Frank
Princeton. 812 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Thomas L. Jeffers

In 1976, when he was a fifty-eight-year-old Princeton professor of comparative literature, Joseph Frank brought out the first volume of what has become a magisterial life of Fyodor Dostoevsky; at eighty-four, he has now published the fifth and last volume. Like Edmund Wilson in an earlier generation, Frank taught himself Russian, learned practically everything there was to know about the culture of Dostoevsky's era (1821-81), read everything the novelist ever wrote, and set himself the formidable task of telling a largely non-Slavist, Anglophonic readership what he found.

Frank helpfully opens this final volume with a reprise of the first four. Dostoevsky had grown up socially less elevated and spiritually more orthodox than his rivals Turgenev and Tolstoy. In the late 1840's, after his first novel *Poor Folk* had made him the darling of utopian revolutionaries who wanted to free the serfs and reorganize Russia along communalist lines, he was arrested as a conspirator, put in front of a firing-squad for what, in hideous jest, turned out to be a mock execution, and sent to Siberia for four years of hard labor, followed by six years as a grunt in the army.

Seeing his life all but snuffed out and then given back to him, or living intimately in prison with peasant murderers and thieves who were nonetheless godly in ways upper- and middle-class people back in Moscow and Petersburg were not, deepened Dostoevsky's Christianity and made him abjure forever the utopian radicalism of his youth. The novels he began to write in the 1860's, after this enforced ten-year hiatus, reflected his personal experiences but reverberated, too, with the ideological conflicts of his time.

What were those conflicts? Perhaps it is easiest to figure them simply as a contest of liberals versus conservatives. The former were Westernizers who argued that the enserfed Russian masses could be liberated through French- or English-style revolutions or reforms. The latter were Slavophiles who believed that the welfare of the Russian masses could be taken care of politically by the Czar and the nobility (had not the Czar emancipated the serfs with the stroke of a pen in 1861?) and religiously and morally by Eastern Orthodoxy. For the Slavophiles, of whom Dostoevsky was decidedly one, the primordial desires of the Russian masses were to be free (a) to choose between good and evil for themselves, without dictation from rulers or even from priests, and (b) to bear the burden of responsibility for their choice and its consequences. The working-out of this moral calculus is the thematic burden of the major novel of Dosto-

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evsky's middle years, *Crime and Punishment* (1866).

IN 1871 Dostoevsky returned from Europe, where he had gone in 1867 to escape from creditors. He discovered a subtle but important change in the Russian mental climate. The Left-radicals of the 1860's had been aggressively atheistic. The new, still Left-leaning Populists of the 1870's, many of them sobered by the numerous assassinations that seemed a prologue to bloody revolution on the French scale, had in effect made peace with Christianity. Not with its doctrines, which remained incredible to most of them, but with its morality, which they believed pointed to social justice for the least of their countryfolk.

Dostoevsky, however, was certain that trying to maintain Christian morality without Christian doctrine—the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the redemptive sacrifice of Christ—would lead to disaster. Irreligious moralists would end up *forcing* people to behave in their rational self-interest in that best of all engineered worlds symbolized, in the first part of *Notes From Underground* (1864), as the ant heap. But people did not want to be ants. As Dostoevsky had discovered in Siberia, the meanest peasant wanted the freedom to express himself, confess and take responsibility for his own sins, and even possess a pitiable scrap of property. And not only did the meanest peasant want this freedom: spiritually, through up-from-underground acts of "irrational" resistance, repentance, and charity of the kind Dostoevsky wrote about in his prison memoir, *The House of the Dead* (1862), the peasant proved he *had* such freedom.

No program to "help the peasantry" emanating from their "betters" had a chance of success if it did not build on what Dostoevsky regarded as the facts of human nature. He made this "Slavophilic" case year after year in his final decade: in *Demons* (1871-2), with its unforgettable exposure of the terror and suicide brought on by well-intending but irreligious radical conspirators; in *The Diary of a Writer* (1873-81), the essays he contributed to a magazine he was also editing; in *Raw Youth* (1875), a failed and unread novel for which Frank makes as good a case as can be made; and finally in his last novel, the ample and magnificent *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80).

Dostoevsky died shortly after finishing this book (he had proposed writing a sequel), and a month after he died, so did Czar Alexander II—assassinated by demon-possessed radicals of the sort Dostoevsky had portrayed in fiction. Frank makes it clear that *The Brothers Karamazov*, a story about parricide, was composed with an eye to earlier attempts on the life of the Czar or of those who served him as Russia's "father."

The Brothers Karamazov is a mystery, and the mystery is about which Karamazov brother has killed and/or conspired to kill the debauched old father. The eldest brother, Dimitry, wants to kill old Karamazov in revenge for the father's having stolen both his money and his mistress. The second brother, Ivan, is willing to see his brother commit the crime, in part because it would hasten the inheritance of his share of the patrimony and in part because, like the character Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, he thinks killing such a father is no crime.

Ivan's amoralist meditations are contained in three brilliant chapters, "Rebellion," "The Grand Inquisitor," and "The Devil." "Rebellion" refers not to Ivan's atheism—he is willing to admit the existence of God—but to his refusal to accept the world as God made it. What he finds unacceptable—*morally* unacceptable—is the suffering of innocent children, the agonizing accounts of which in this chapter were, as Frank indicates, drawn by Dostoevsky from newspapers or historical records. If this is the "show" God is putting on, Ivan declines the ticket that is supposed to let him in.

Ivan knows the theologically correct answers to the question of why God permits evil: first, to ensure people's freedom to choose between it and the good; second, to give good people a cause to fight for. But he thinks these answers misguided. As his prose poem about the Grand Inquisitor reveals, people do not mind having a cause to fight for, but they generally do not want to have to choose that cause for themselves. They would rather have their supply of daily bread guaranteed, and let their masters—in this case, the Grand Inquisitor and other authorities of church and state—provide them with party-line answers to the big questions. So (as Ivan imagines it) the Inquisitor and others of his Jesuit order have taken upon themselves the burden of providing those answers, a kindness that just happens to entail torturing and burning anyone who does not get in line.

The Inquisitor's Big-Brotherly self-justifications and methods of enforcement portend all the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, especially, as Frank remarks, of the left-wing variety. (Nazis, after all, candidly declared race-war, while Communists spoke disingenuously about brotherly love just as the Inquisitor said he was acting in the spirit of Jesus.) As for Ivan, he figures he can emulate the Inquisitor's example: just as the Inquisitor claims to be "correcting" God's creation, Ivan can "correct" his own situation by rubbing out his monstrous father.

Ivan's heart, however, is no more able than Raskolnikov's to accede to such a program. His schizophrenia on this matter floridly manifests itself in a chapter recording his hallucinatory conversation with

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the devil. For Dosteovsky, his creator, the sane position—which will seem crazy to victimologists—is to submit to the "mystic" reverence we feel for our fathers and mothers. Without it, the family breaks up, and soon after, the society. It is all very Shakespearean, especially if one thinks of those history plays about bad kings whom it is tempting but nevertheless wrong to depose.

Dostoevsky's correspondence clarifies what for an impatient reader might be obscure: namely, that Ivan's rebellious position is at bottom egoistic (who is he to presume to "correct" God's creation?), and that a triumphant counter-statement is *there*, in the novel, in Alyosha, the youngest Karamazov brother, and in the saintly monk Zosima. Zosima's career in its early stages resembles Dimitry's, full of sensuality and anger. In its later stages, it connects with what we have seen of Alyosha, who returns good for evil, forgives his enemies, and defends the weak. Together, these Christian heroes prove that Ivan underestimates human nature: people *can* actively love one another.

They can especially love one another, it seems, if they are Russian—or, more precisely, un-Westernized Russians. Although Dostoevsky does not make the mistake of sentimentalizing the Russian peasants, he does allow them a "mystery" other nations' peasants are said to lack. Frank points out that in the 1870's Eastern Orthodoxy had taken a stand against such ethnocentrism, but Dostoevsky seems not to have noticed. The results are sometimes troubling: when it comes to salvation, other so-called Christians (Catholics, Protestants) need not apply, and people of other faiths, notably Jews, should not even inquire.*

Fortunately, being a chauvinistic tribalist on some issues did not disable Dostoevsky as an artist. What other name, among Russian novelists, can we adduce alongside Tolstoy's? And even as a moralist, Dostoevsky puts forward insights that, in our time as well as his, are essential. We are "by nature" freedom-needing creatures, and the freedom we need is indivisible: the freedom to choose between good and evil is bound up with the freedom to say and print what we think, which is

* Perhaps compensating for his earlier neglect of this topic, thoroughly explored in David Goldstein's *Dostoevsky and the Jews* (1981), Frank here takes up the unpleasant task of registering Dostoevsky's anti-Semitic statements in his essays, letters, and novels.

TWO JEWS ON A TRAIN

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Translated by Catherine Tihanyi

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—*Kirkus Reviews*

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bound up with the freedom to worship as we will, which is bound up with the freedom to trade and own property, etc.

But best, in my opinion, is *The Brothers Karamazov*'s emphasis on children. If they are not trained to love freedom, and to deal charitably with one another, then they will have no resistance to the Inquisitors who offer to organize their lives. Alyosha's work with the boys who first persecute and then draw near to their pathetic schoolfellow Ilyusha is a triumph of psychological penetration. How easy it would have been for a lesser novelist than Dostoevsky to turn Ilyusha's death into a risibly sentimental spectacle. As it is, I challenge anyone not to weep at least inwardly when Ilyusha dies, or to refrain from joining the boys in shouting "Hurrah for Karamazov" when Alyosha assures them, "half laughing, half ecstatic," that they shall all be resurrected and see each other again.

This is not a doctrine to agree or disagree with; it is what Frank recognizes as an aesthetic idea, like the final note of optimistic innocence after all the agonies in an 18th-century opera. As he says with unembarrassed directness, it conveys, "in a naïvely acceptable and touching form, the basic beliefs and moral-religious convictions [Dostoevsky] has sought to champion so peerlessly."

Peerless, too, is Frank's achievement in this five-volume life. Its clear depiction of Dostoevsky's epoch, its untendentiously critical synopses of the fiction, above all its respect for the artist himself, even when his hopes were fantastic and his fears ominously delusional, will be the despair of competitors for a hundred years. Meanwhile, many grateful readers will want to have Frank by their side as they read or reread Dostoevsky himself, a writer who can sometimes seem to understand us better than we do ourselves.

Dove Tales

The Russia Hand:
A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy
by Strobe Talbott
Random House. 480 pp. $29.95

Reviewed by
Jacob Heilbrunn

STROBE TALBOTT has devoted much of his career to chronicling the cold war, a subject he fundamentally misunderstood while the great conflict between the U.S. and the USSR was under way. As a prolific correspondent for *Time* magazine and the author of several books, Talbott consistently championed arms control and berated conservatives for their obtuseness in opposing détente with the Kremlin. When Ronald Reagan became President, Talbott dismissed him as a "befuddled character," warning that his hard-line stance would only retard internal Soviet reform while his determination to build a ballistic-missile-defense system might provoke nuclear war.

When the cold war ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, in no small part because of the pressure applied by the United States under Reagan, Talbott did not acknowledge that he might have been wrong. Instead, without so much as a blink, he replaced his stale myths with fresh ones. Having previously asserted that Reagan's policies were actively dangerous, now he insisted that they were irrelevant. "[T]he Soviet system has gone into meltdown because of the inadequacies and defects at its core," he wrote in 1990, and "not because of anything the outside world has done or not done or threatened to do." Doves like himself had it right "all along."

Talbott went on to serve as deputy Secretary of State in the Clinton administration. Now, in *The Russia Hand*, he seeks to show that his (and Clinton's) solicitous approach to foreign relations played a key role in transforming what had been a totalitarian state into a stable democracy. Studded with blurbs from Washington worthies, Talbott's memoir seems intended to ratify his standing as a successor to the cold-war generation of wise men like George F. Kennan and Dean Acheson. But Talbott does not tout his own accomplishments; to the contrary, he remains ever the discreet courtier, burnishing his master's reputation and basking in the reflected glow. It is Clinton, not Talbott, who is the indefatigable and visionary "Russia hand" of the book's title.

THE BURNISHING begins with a look back at the days Talbott and Clinton spent together in 1968 as they traversed the Atlantic en route to Oxford, where they would both be Rhodes scholars. Already, in Talbott's telling, Clinton was a serious student of foreign affairs: "[M]y first conversation of any substance with him was during the ocean crossing, and the subject was the Soviet Union, the giant, alien, antagonistic country that had preoccupied U.S. foreign policy all our lives." And already, it seems, both young men were yearning for that golden day when a liberalized Soviet Union would allow the U.S. to leave behind the distortions and disputations of the cold war.

Two and a half decades later, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of Communist rule, and Clinton in the presidency, that day had arrived. Against the wishes of domestic-policy advisers, especially George Stephanopoulos, who wanted the fledgling administration to focus on the economy at the expense of foreign affairs, Clinton made it a high priority not to "lose" Russia. Given the neo-fascists and neo-Communists waiting in the wings to replace Boris Yeltsin, the Russian president had to be supported at almost any

JACOB HEILBRUNN *is a member of the editorial board of the* Los Angeles Times.

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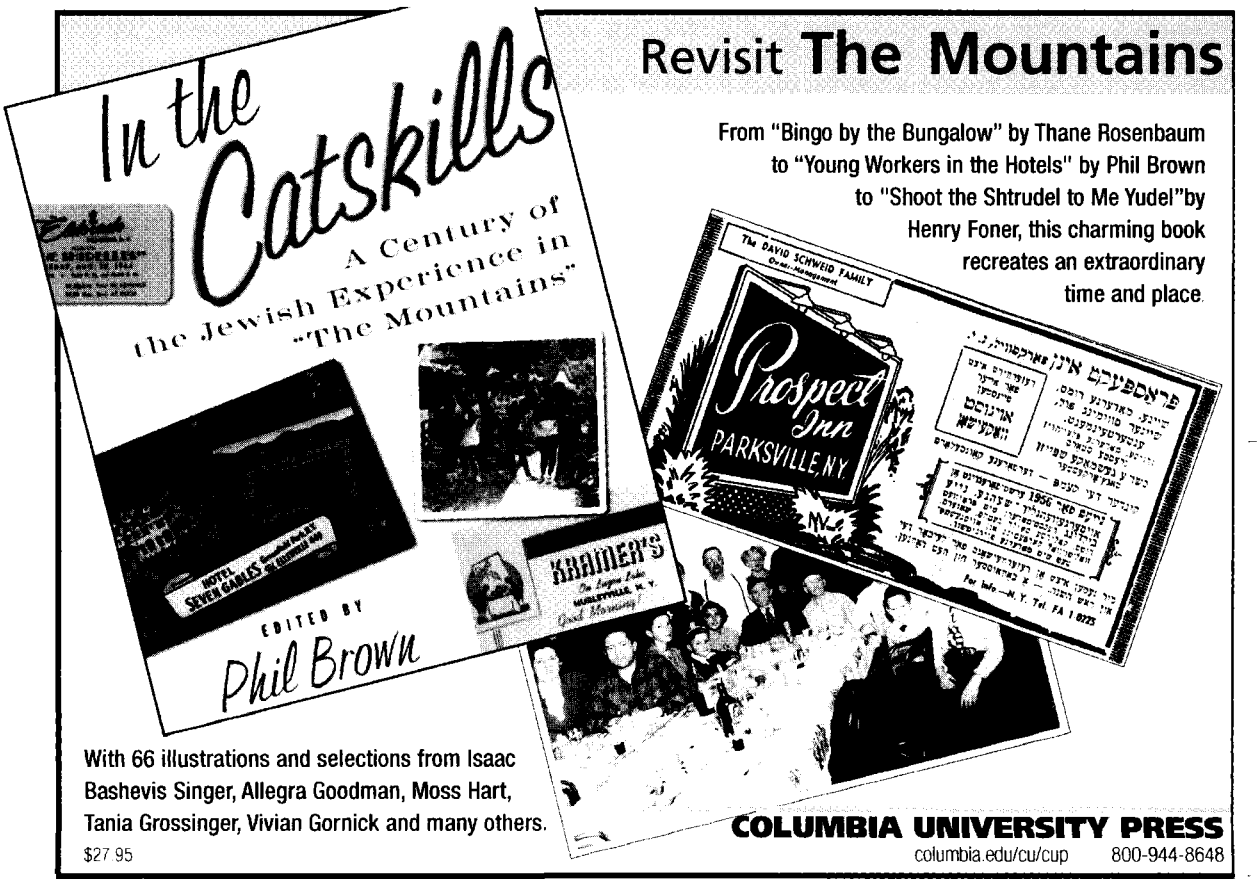
price, even if doing so meant "the enrichment and empowerment of the oligarchs" running Russian industry. Both the State Department and the Treasury were prodded to come up with ambitious plans for loans and direct aid to Russia. "I don't care what it costs, it'll be a bargain," Clinton told Talbott. "If Russia goes bad . . . we'll be . . . spending really big money to wage a new cold war."

In addition to stabilizing Russia internally, the aid package had a second, no less important objective. It would, Clinton and Talbott hoped, help to secure Russian cooperation in foreign-policy hot spots around the world. Once more, Talbott portrays Clinton as the driving force behind negotiations with Russia on NATO expansion, missile defense, and the Balkan wars. In each of these areas, in Talbott's recounting, the President's policies were a resounding success—a tribute to his shrewdness as an analyst not only of politics but of politicians.

How much credence should one place in Talbott's sunny account? In discussing efforts to repair the Russian economy, Talbott soft-pedals the scope of the looting and corruption set in motion by the cash infusion engineered by the Clinton administration; to the extent that he acknowledges the seriousness of the problem, he points a finger not at the White House but at Lawrence Summers, then at the Treasury Department. This, however, is unfair, and in any case unnecessary. Even if the aid program was implemented in a less than optimal mode, and even if a lot of money was siphoned off into undeserving hands, the fact is that in light of Russia's bottomless economic problems, all paths toward reform would have entailed major difficulties. The Clinton administration's attempt to aid stabilization was as defensible as any alternative policy.

Elsewhere, though, the record is far more mixed than Talbott acknowledges. True, Washington successfully persuaded Russia to accept NATO expansion, but it was really the backing of Helmut Kohl, Germany's chancellor, that made continued Russian resistance futile. In the successive crises in Yugoslavia, the administration's diplomacy was without distinction and also without success. The best that can be said for it is that it dissuaded Russia from actively seeking to block the United States by force, but even that assertion must be qualified; as we know from the memoirs of Gen-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eral Wesley Clark, the prospect of an armed clash between Russian and American units appeared harrowingly close in the endgame of the Kosovo war.

The one foreign-policy area that has gotten the least attention is the one where Clinton made almost no progress—and the one that may turn out to be the most consequential. Throughout his years in office, Clinton proved unable to dissuade Russia from selling nuclear technology to Iran. The Islamic fanatics governing that country continue to race forward in their effort to create nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, while also supporting terrorism in the Middle East and points beyond.

IN SUM, Talbott's portrait of Clinton as a brilliant "Russia hand" is vastly overdrawn. Indeed, considering the fecklessness of the administration in virtually every other area of foreign policy, from its placatory approach to Communist China to its timidity toward tiny Haiti, it would be truly amazing if Clinton had been a pillar of wisdom and strength in dealing with Russia. Although Talbott's account of eight years of diplomacy is engrossing and highly readable, its brief for Clinton himself is marred by an excess of the technique that distinguished the President whom he served: spin control.

Still, whatever the deficiencies of this book, and of the policy Talbott championed, one must acknowledge that the Clinton administration did, however clumsily, lay a foundation for what has followed. In fact, the essence of its conciliatory approach to Russia has been retained by the Bush administration, and it has led to developments that are almost beyond imagining. Vladimir Putin, Yeltsin's successor, is on the U.S. side in the war against terrorism, and has accepted the presence of American troops all across Russia's southern frontier. And Russia today is, of all things, a junior member of NATO—the very alliance that was arrayed against it for almost five decades.

The degree to which credit for this state of affairs can be imputed to the Clintonites has yet to be dispassionately calculated, but the exercise would be well worth undertaking by someone less heavily invested in it than Strobe Talbott. Along the way, it would also be worth pondering how someone like him, whose views on the Soviet-American rivalry were so divorced from reality, could have achieved even modest success as a State Department policymaker. Undoubtedly, the responsibilities of office helped to tamp down some of the more ideologically charged nostrums that so frequently surfaced in Talbott the journalist. But another part of the answer may have to do simply with the cunning of history. The emollient instincts of an unregenerate dove may not have been all that unsuitable for dealing with a bruised and crippled Russia.

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Collision Course: The Strange Convergence of Affirmative Action and Immigration Policy in America

by Hugh Davis Graham

Oxford. 246 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
Terry Eastland

DURING THE Senate floor debate on the Civil-Rights Act of 1964, Hubert Humphrey memorably defended the legislation against the charge that it would lead to racial preferences. If anyone could show how Title VII of the act, which banned discrimination, would make an employer "hire on the basis of percentage or quota related to color," he said, "I will start eating the pages [of the bill] one after another." A year later, President Lyndon Johnson, at the signing ceremony for another new law, the Immigration and Nationality Act, declared that its liberalization of existing policy was "not revolutionary."

Both men, writes Hugh Davis Graham in his new book, turned out to be "profoundly wrong" in their expectations. Humphrey's civil-rights act was quickly hijacked by the supporters of "affirmative action," while Johnson's supposedly modest immigration reforms fell prey to new economic and demographic realities. But that is not the end of this story of "unintended consequences," according to Graham, a respected historian of the

TERRY EASTLAND, *publisher of* The Weekly Standard, *is the author of* Ending Affirmative Action: The Case for Colorblind Justice *(1996).*

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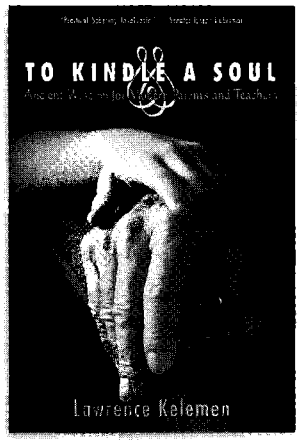
civil-rights movement who passed away in March. Having developed in ways that their authors did not anticipate, the two policies themselves, he argues, soon converged toward each other on a "collision course."

As Graham shows, affirmative action emerged as a policy idea even before passage of the 1964 act. At this early stage, it was understood in terms of outreach to blacks; officials took care to avoid the notion that the program required "proportional representation." But by the late 1960's, and in defiance of Title VII's explicit requirement of color-blindness, federal agencies had devised what Graham calls "hard" affirmative action, which sought to ensure that blacks were given not just equal opportunities but equal outcomes in the competition for jobs. Humphrey's legislation had been turned on its head, compelling the very sort of hiring quotas that he opposed. Before long, the policy had spread to other areas, most notably university admissions and government contracting.

As for the Immigration and Nationality Act, its basic achievement was to *eliminate* quotas, removing the nation-specific totals that since the 1920's had favored immigrants from northern and western Europe over those from Asia. The new law also made family reunification a priority, inviting immigrants to bring in not only their spouses and children but also their brothers, sisters, and parents.

To the surprise of its sponsors, the most visible effect of the reform was, Graham writes, "a tidal wave of immigration." With the overall number of new entries no longer capped, immigrants began bringing ever-greater portions of their extended families. Estimates had suggested that the revised law would attract some 300,000 newcomers a year, but by the early 1980's, the annual total had reached almost 600,000. Surprising as well, in so



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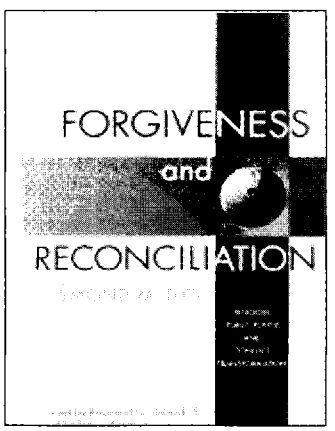

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short a period of time, were the dramatically different national origins of the new immigrants, with the overwhelming majority of them coming from Latin America and Asia.

What most interests Graham is how this unexpected influx has affected affirmative action. Though that policy was originally designed with blacks in mind, and specifically to overcome the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow, even the first programs in the late 1960's included Hispanics and Asians. By the 1970's, some programs also encompassed women. Civil-rights groups had pressed for this expansion of the affirmative-action roster, Graham points out, because they believed that spreading the program to more groups would broaden and strengthen the coalition behind it. Little thought was given to the important historical and cultural differences both among the various groups and within certain ones, especially the overarching categories of Hispanic and Asian.

Within a few years, however, the unexpected rise in immigration had transformed the face of affirmative action. With a vastly greater population of eligible nonblacks, the policy could no longer be described just in remedial terms. By the 1970's, a new rationale emerged. Affirmative action now presented itself, more expansively, as a way to ensure that institutions throughout society realized the full benefits of racial and ethnic "diversity."

As GRAHAM sees it, immigration has made even more evident the illogic and incoherence that were present in affirmative action from the outset. Eighty percent of immigrants now qualify for minority preferences, he reports, a fact that makes a mockery of the idea that the program somehow compensates for past discrimination in America.

There is also the matter of racial classification. As first devised, affirmative action assumed that individuals could be assigned a single racial or ethnic identity. The program ratified, in effect, the racist "one-drop" rule under which the South defined anyone with even the smallest trace of black blood as black. But large-scale immigration has shown how flawed this assumption was, since one of its most visible results has been an unprecedented level of ethnic intermarriage. Graham cites the example of the golfer Tiger Woods, who could identify himself as Caucasian, black, American-Indian, or Asian, but famously settled on his own coinage, "Cablinasian," to reflect his four-way background.

As for the prospects of the two policies whose fortunes he traces, Graham believes that, with respect to immigration, the long-running debate between restrictionists and liberalizers has shifted decisively in favor of the latter. Affirmative action is a different matter, however. Lacking "a coherent rationale consistent with social justice," that policy is, he believes, in retreat. "Politically and philosophically," he writes, it finds "almost no defenders in the ranks of American opinion leaders."

Collision Course is a concise, informative history of two much-debated policies, made richer by Graham's insight into their obvious relationship to each other. To be sure, a few important points about affirmative action go undiscussed here—most egregiously, Graham seems unaware that because of their high level of academic achievement, Asian-Americans long ago ceased to be included in affirmative-action admissions policies and are actually discriminated *against*—but the book's candor on the subject is refreshing.

Writing as a historian rather than as an advocate, Graham does not offer his own view of affirmative action. But if he once was a supporter of the policy, it is hard to see how, on the evidence assembled in this book, he could have remained one.

Indeed, his own close study of affirmative action may have led him to underestimate its staying power. He suggests that the policy has survived largely because of its advocates' success in "capturing" the civil-rights agencies and influencing a few key congressional committees. But its hold on the liberal imagination runs far deeper than he allows, as we have seen recently in the fierce legal and policy debate over racial preferences in university admissions. It would be a serious mistake to discount the ability of the civil-rights lobby to find ever-more convoluted reasons for maintaining our pernicious policies of official discrimination.

Aesthetic Movements

Brushes with History: Writing on Art from the *Nation*, 1865-2001
Edited by Peter G. Meyer with an introduction by Arthur C. Danto
Thunder's Mouth/Nation. 532 pp. $19.95

Reviewed by
Michael J. Lewis

FROM ITS glee over the 1868 impeachment of Andrew Johnson to its displeasure over the 1998 impeachment of Bill Clinton, what American magazine has been more consistent than the *Nation*? It occupies the same terrain in the political landscape that it did in 1865, when it was begun as a journal of radical Republicanism. In its early years, the magazine's tone was shaped by the abolitionism of its predominantly Unitarian and Quaker founders. That stance led seamlessly and without interruption to

MICHAEL J. LEWIS *is chairman of the art department at Williams College and the author most recently of* The Gothic Revival. *His "Visions of Ground Zero" appeared in the April* COMMENTARY.

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turn-of-the-century progressivism, thence to Stalinism, and now, in the post-cold-war world, to a brand of leftism that seldom strays too far from the conventional wisdom of the average faculty club.

This history is well known. Less well known is the *Nation*'s tradition of writing about the visual arts. From the outset, the journal has invariably had a regular art critic, a roster that over the decades has included such prominent men of American letters as Henry James, Bernard Berenson, Clement Greenberg, and Hilton Kramer. In fact, as becomes clear from this new anthology edited by Peter Meyer, no other organ of art criticism in the country approaches the *Nation* either for longevity or for generally high standards.

The high standards may have something to do with the editorial firewall that the *Nation* has always prided itself on maintaining between the overtly political matter at the front of the magazine and the literary and cultural coverage at the back. This book certainly offers evidence that, on the whole, the magazine's art reviewers have enjoyed independence: much of the writing consists of genuinely aesthetic criticism that looks at art as art and not merely as a sublimated form of politics. But there is also evidence that, at times, the much-vaunted firewall had all the flame-resistance of a set of Venetian blinds.

The important artistic battleline over the past century-and-a-half has not run between modernism and tradition but rather between an art that seeks to *be* something and one that seeks to *do* something. For modernity is a comparative quality, and what is modern or progressive at one moment is hopelessly reactionary at the next. By contrast, belief in art for art's sake is an absolute, and its presence distinguishes entire episodes—the aesthetic movement of the 1870's and 1880's, the heyday of abstraction in the decade

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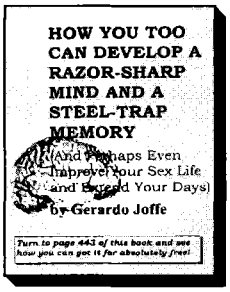
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following World War II—just as its absence distinguishes others. We are now emerging from a period during which, as in the 1930's, art has been largely enlisted in the service of politics.

At its inception, the *Nation* drew a particular link between art and politics. One of the magazine's founders was Frederic Law Olmsted, the celebrated landscape architect and designer of Central Park. An abolitionist, Olmsted had written an important series in the *New York Times* during the 1850's about the American South, connecting the moral degradation of slavery with the physical degradation of the landscape. As a contributor to the *Nation*, he likewise insisted on the connection between America's public parks and monuments and the moral health of the community.

Such a link was fully in the spirit of American Transcendentalism, and also in the spirit of the age. The 1860's marked the apogee of the influence of John Ruskin, the English critic who believed that the artist's faithful imitation of nature was a form of pictorial prayer—an act of reverence. This heady doctrine was followed enthusiastically by Russell Sturgis, the *Nation*'s first art critic and a prominent architect who designed several dormitories at Yale in the Ruskinian Gothic mode (although Meyer does not appear to know this).

The idea of a common moral basis to politics and art gave a congenial unity to the early *Nation*. But the insistence on judging art in terms of morality swiftly dropped from favor. Instead of serving as an instrument of improvement, it was soon being said that the purpose of art was to delight for its own sake. Aesthetes like the painter James Whistler were fiercely hostile to the prim moralizing of Ruskin's camp. This was a clash of seismic magnitude, whose culminating earthquake was the 1878 libel suit brought by Whistler in the wake of a sputteringly contemptuous review by Ruskin ("cockney impudence . . . flinging a pot of paint in the public's face") of Whistler's *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, a nearly abstract rendition of fireworks at night.

By an accident of timing, the *Nation* was fortunate to have as its critic at this time the young Henry James, who would himself represent the zenith of the aesthetic movement in American literature. James's bemused ringside-seat reports of the trial (he was living in London) are the highlight of this anthology. Although he acknowledged that Whistler's paintings were "eccentric and imperfect," James also took the painter's side. "Mr. Ruskin's language," he wrote, "quite transgresses the decencies of criticism, and he has been laying about him for some years past with such promiscuous violence that it gratifies one's sense of justice to see him brought up as a disorderly character."

In the event, Whistler won his suit, but received only a nominal farthing in damages. James's own verdict was appropriately arch: while the judgment left Ruskin relatively unscathed, he could not have been gratified "at finding that the fullest weight of his disapproval is thought to be represented by the sum of one farthing."

WELL INTO the 20th century, this sort of erudite and refined criticism remained the rule. Each year, the *Nation*'s reviewer faithfully inspected the exhibition of New York's National Academy of Design, commending and criticizing with confidence, certain that cultivation of the arts was a mark of a high civilization. As with American cultural life in general, the magazine turned cosmopolitan, reviewing European art regularly and expecting products of American culture to be judged by the lofty standards of the Continent.

The key figure in this period was James's successor, Elizabeth Robins Pennell, a journalist of formidable pugnacity and wit of whom Meyer makes much—perhaps too much. Although he is clearly pleased to have found a progressive feminist aboard the *Nation* at such an early date, Pennell was not the "first regularly published female art critic in American letters," a distinction that belongs to Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer. One suspects Meyer's enthusiasm would have waned if he were aware of her social views, or had read her extended tirades in *Our Philadelphia* (1914) about the "slatternly and dirty" Russian Jews.

In any event, the wind was about to shift again with the onset of radical European modernism. As its reaction to the 1913 Armory Show demonstrates, the *Nation* was no more prepared for this challenge than any other institution of American culture. The exhibition, originally conceived to showcase the work of progressive American artists, was transformed at the last minute by the addition of works that gave Americans their first comprehensive look at Cézanne, Picasso, and Duchamp.

Among the ranks of the scandalized was the *Nation*'s rather fastidious reviewer, Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., who dismissed not only the artistic movements on display—cubism (either "a clever hoax or a negligible pedantry") and post-impressionism ("the emotional reduction to the absurd of the . . . anti-naturalistic fallacy")—but even those that were not, like futurism ("charlatanry and shameless puffery"). Mather was no know-nothing. But his elegant criticism worked from within tradition, and as he correctly observed, the Armory Show required nothing less than a comprehensive reassessment of the relationship of art to society. This he was not able or prepared to do.

For the next few decades, the *Nation* did not speak with a coherent voice on modernism, publishing reviews by such impassioned modernists as Louis Lozowick and Marsden Hartley while giving the role of art critic to Thomas Craven,

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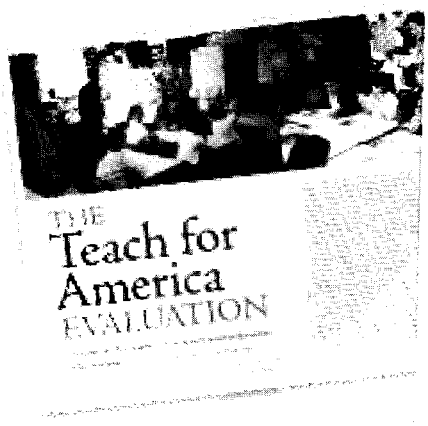

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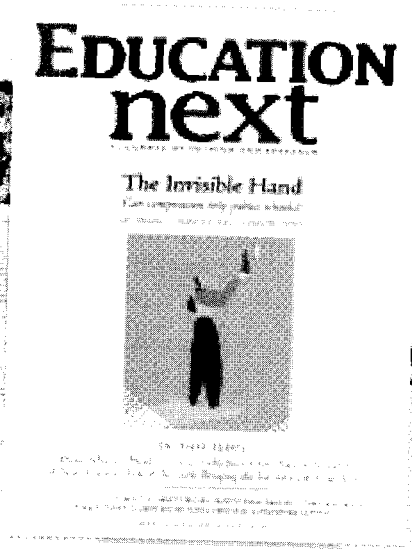

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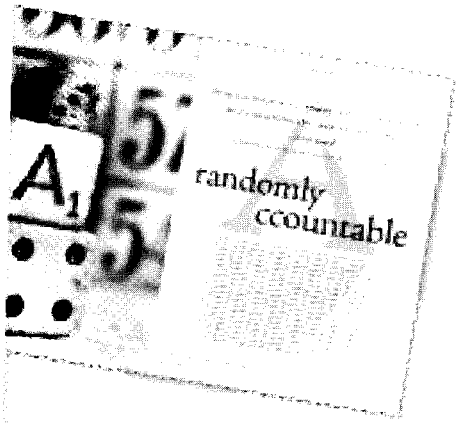

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a stalwart champion of tradition who regarded Thomas Hart Benton as the chief luminary of American art. But then came the 1930's, and, at a stroke, progressive art and progressive politics were once again neatly aligned. In the wake of the Depression, coverage of art exhibitions dwindled, issues of quality were downplayed, and criticism tended to be more about what art *did* than about what art *was*. Fortuitously, this seems also to have reflected the ideological predispositions of Freda Kirchwey, who became editor in 1933 and owner in 1937.

A sure sign of the new dispensation was the appearance of reviews, often highly partisan in nature, by critics untrained in art, including Paul Rosenfeld, a novelist and music critic; Margaret Marshall, the journal's literary editor; and the leftist newspaper columnist Heywood Broun, who wrote that painting "must be done by people who are hot and burning and very much bothered" and who spoke at a notorious rally of the Artists Congress in New York, an arm of the Moscow-steered Popular Front.

BUT THE story does not end there, either. In the cold-war years, in still another turn of the screw, the *Nation* was destined to become the voice of a rigorous art criticism that had no use for politics, or indeed for any content other than the aesthetic and formal. This was the legacy of Clement Greenberg, who served as critic from 1943 to 1949 and whose dry and urgent reviews vaulted Willem De Kooning, the sculptor David Smith, and above all Jackson Pollock to national prominence.

Ironically, Greenberg's demand for an apolitical art had a political motivation. A former Trotskyist and later a prominent cold-war liberal, he had become disgusted by the art of the 1930's in which the same vapid realism promiscuously served Hitler, Stalin, and the Roosevelt administration. Political art, he argued, was inevitably kitsch. This was the strongest word in Greenberg's critical vocabulary, conjuring the worst of bourgeois taste while also betraying his own lingering habit of judging art according to Marxist class analysis. Indeed, Greenberg's trademark style was to meld the impersonal and "objective" vocabulary of Marxism with a highly personal reaction to art itself, which he expressed in exceptionally pungent prose.

In 1949 Greenberg resigned (eventually taking a position at COMMENTARY), but he ended his tenure with a characteristically belligerent gesture, writing an attack on the *Nation*'s reflexively pro-Stalin editorial line. The editors refused to print his letter, and when he published it elsewhere he was promptly sued by Freda Kirchwey. *Brushes with History* reprints the journal's various pronouncements on the suit, but not—significantly?—Greenberg's letter.

GREENBERG'S HANDPICKED successor was S. Lane Faison, a Williams College professor who served from 1951 to 1955 and is regarded as one of the great practitioners of connoisseurship. Faison, now ninety-five, is also an alert and active writer and my colleague. When I spoke to him about this book, he recalled that a condition of his writing for the *Nation* was independence, which Margaret Marshall assured him he would have so long as she edited the back of the book. Upon leaving the magazine in 1953, she warned Faison that his position would eventually become untenable.

This happened two years later when Kirchwey summoned him to prescribe review topics like the social-realist art of the brothers Moses and Raphael Soyer and government art at the United Nations. When he demurred, he says, Kirchwey suggested cordially that perhaps they could no longer work together. It *is* surely significant that none of his pieces is reprinted here, and that he was not interviewed for the book. Indeed, this whole period of the early 1950's is misleadingly represented by a few items on cold-war policy toward the arts; in actuality, the formalist tradition at the *Nation* extended continuously from Greenberg through Faison and into the 1970's in the hands of such distinguished successors as Fairfield Porter, Max Kozloff, Hilton Kramer, and Lawrence Alloway.

Which brings us closer to the present. One hardly needs to have followed the scene during the 1980's to know that art became more relentlessly political than at any time in American history. The so-called art wars of the 80's turned on issues of censorship, public funding for the arts, artistic agitprop (frequently over AIDS), and public sculpture and memorials. In that overheated environment, the *Nation* published some of the most embarrassing reviews in this volume; perhaps the most appalling is the cumbersome and interminable attempt by Paul Mattick, Jr. to defend the public funding of Karen Finley, Andres Serrano, and Robert Mapplethorpe—they, respectively, of chocolate-smeared nudity, *Piss Christ*, and the inserted bullwhip. That even during that contentious decade there was also resistance at the *Nation* to reading art in purely political terms was largely due to Arthur C. Danto, the Columbia philosophy professor who became art critic in 1984. Among other welcome surprises, Danto vigorously supported the fight to disinstall Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, a gigantic and particularly hateful rusting steel blade that had been placed athwart the Jacob Javits plaza in New York City, thereby rendering it useless as a public space.

THE IMPULSE to use art to accomplish something, to tell a story or teach a lesson, is one to which American art is peculiarly susceptible. It is a legacy of our Puritan culture, with its suspicion of art as idol-

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A Demilitarized Palestinian State

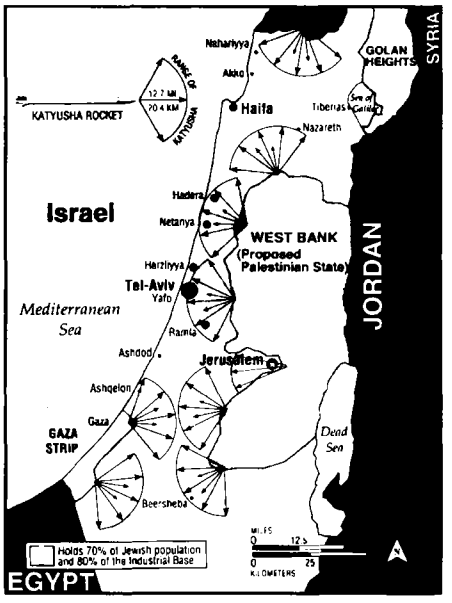
Should Israel, should the world, rely on it?

Even the most fervent advocates of a Palestinian state are virtually unanimous that such a state should be "demilitarized," since it might otherwise imperil, or perhaps even endanger, the very existence of Israel. "Demilitarization," it is believed, would obviate any military threat to the State of Israel.

What are the facts?

Israel threatened by enemies. Israel is a very small country. Including the Golan and the "West Bank," it is only one-half the size of San Bernardino County in California. Israel has been in a "cold peace" with Egypt since 1978 and has also concluded a peace treaty with Jordan. Other Arab states are still in a declared or undeclared state of war with Israel. Iran, Moslem though not Arab, is the most determined and deadly of them all. It lurks in the background, its foremost military and political objective being the destruction of the state of Israel.

The "Palestine Liberation Organization" (PLO), now transformed into the "Palestinian Authority" (PA), is a terror organization that has two immutable purposes, namely: to kill as many Jews as possible; and to demolish Israel, the Jewish State, and to replace it with "Palestine". And "Palestine" means "from the River to the Sea," as Arafat never ceases to explain to his followers. It is almost incredible that supposedly levelheaded and well-intentioned people would have entered into a "peace agreement" with such an organization.



A Palestinian state—demilitarized?

Subsequent developments of course have proven the folly of it. The Palestinians have never kept a single one of the solemn promises they made when they signed on to the "Oslo Agreement"; specifically, they have never forsworn the clauses in their "covenant" that call for the destruction of Israel. They have utterly disregarded and violated the limitations imposed on the number of their "police" (army), the restrictions on armament, and, most importantly, the promise not to use violence in order to attain their political goals. Without any provocation, they launched their bloody "intifada," now well into its second year, equipped with heavy armaments smuggled into the territory (98% of the "West Bank" and Gaza) allotted to them by the goodwill of Israel. This armament would have been greatly enhanced had the Israelis not intercepted the KARINE A, a ship laden with over fifty tons of the most advanced weaponry.

The myth of demilitarization. The assumption that "Palestine" would be demilitarized is not tenable. The Arab nations would not allow it, even if the Palestinians themselves so desired. Also, the Palestinian entity would have thousands of trained soldiers, camouflaged as police. They could be helicoptered in minutes to positions on the border with Israel, with armored forces from Syria reaching them within the same night. But such mobilization of the "demilitarized" Palestine wouldn't be required. The weapons of preference of Arab terrorists are the Soviet-made Katyushas, highly effective missiles, truck-mounted and mobile, ideal for hit-and-run raids against Israel. Israel could not prevent them from flooding Palestine. A look at the map makes clear that these rockets, short-range though they may be, would dominate the heartland of Israel. Easily moved and hidden along Israel's new eastern borders—to be increased from less than 40 miles in length to over 200 miles—these Katyushah rockets would rain destruction over most of Israel. They would cover in their entirety Israel's narrow waist that holds 70% of the Jewish population of the country, 80% of its industrial base, its only international airport, and its most important military installations.

A Palestinian state next door to an Israel that would only be nine miles wide at its vulnerable waist, and that could be cut in two by one thrust of a tank column, would leave Israel in constant mortal danger. The Palestinians have proven that they do not want peace -- they want to destroy Israel. Giving them an independent country, even against solemn promises of demilitarization, would ring the death knell for the Jewish State. Only fuzzy thinkers and incurable optimists can believe that an independent Palestine would become a peaceful neighbor of Israel. If Israel ceded the Gaza Strip -- the invasion route since before biblical times -- and Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") to its sworn enemies, it would make the country indefensible and Israel would have laid the groundwork for its own destruction. Tanks, warplanes, and missiles would only be needed for the final mopping-up process. In the meantime, mortars and Katyushas located on the Judean ridges -- Israel's proposed new borders -- would suffice to paralyze life and industrial and military activity in Israel. One can only hope that ultimately Israel's leaders and the world -- even those who are well-intentioned and wish for Israel's survival -- will understand this danger and that they will not press Israel to make further concessions that will endanger its very existence.

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atry and its grudging willingness to tolerate it only for the instruction it might impart. This same impulse is what connects the pious and wooden narrative art of the early 19th century with the equally pious and wooden consciousness-raising art of the last two decades.

Given the consistent political heritage of the *Nation*, and the perennial temptation to mistake good politics for good art, what is striking in the end is how well its art criticism has held up. But a random sampling of reviews from its pages would have illustrated that better than the self-conscious, somewhat censored, and mildly tendentious selection given us in *Brushes with History*.

Hispanics All

Brown:
The Last Discovery of America
by Richard Rodriguez
Viking. 232 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Dan Seligman

AMONG PEOPLE who think deeply about sociopolitical matters, the color brown was last rated a heavyweight subject in early 2000. That was when Naomi Wolf was counseling Al Gore at $15,000 a month. Her advice to the candidate: dress in earth tones, which were said to be associated with "alpha male" sensibilities that do well with voters. Or something like that.

Now seeking to deliver an even deeper message about brownness and all its ramifications is Richard Rodriguez, best known as one of the "essayists" on the PBS show *NewsHour*. Stylistically, *Brown* is somewhat like those television essays: witty, poetic, obscure, never quite getting to the point, but fun to follow—for a while. It comes on the heels of two other volumes of musings by Rodriguez about his life, and brings him into his fifties. Although largely autobiographical, the book also shows signs of wanting to record some serious thoughts about America's burgeoning brown (i.e., Hispanic) population.

There are not many sustained threads in Rodriguez's presentation, but one of his serious thoughts is that browns have reshaped our conception of the country's history and geography. Until quite recently, America has been conceived of as a land where the major happenings flowed from the old East to the new West. Now, with Hispanics coming at us from the south, and emerging as the country's largest minority, social change increasingly appears to have a new dynamic. Indeed, Hispanics, in Rodriguez's view, will come to dominate the U.S., culturally if not numerically: "The future is brown, is my thesis."

Along the way toward this thesis, Rodriguez grieves about the term "Hispanic," and carries on at some length about its politicized origins: it was, he says, the noxious Richard Nixon who added it to the official list of ethnic self-designations. Like many others who have found fault with this term, Rodriguez asserts that it is wildly illogical, embracing as it does so many different cultures: "the songwriter from Buenos Aires, the Bolivian from a high mountain village, the Mayan Indian who refuses Spanish, the Mayan Indian who exaggerates Spanish, the Salvadoran evangelical Protestant, the Cuban anti-Communist, the Cuban Communist, the green criminal [who's that?], the Catholic nun, the red poet," and more—"Hispanics all!"

ON THE inadequacy of the term "Hispanic," Rodriguez is surely right (although he is unfair to Nixon, failing to mention that the President was responding to demands from Hispanic politicians when he added the term to the 1970 census). Rodriguez's larger thesis, that the future of the U.S. is brown, is something else again. The proposition is hardly unfamiliar, but it is radically undeveloped for a book that bears the title *Brown*, and Rodriguez nowhere seeks to parse it in a methodical way. He does not look at U.S. immigration policy or Hispanic demographic data or any other kind of data, settling instead for rhetoric that appears to spring forth naturally:

> And every day and every night poor people trample the legal fiction that America controls its own destiny. There is something of inevitability . . . in what I begin hearing in America from businessmen—a hint of Latin American fatalism, a recognition of tragedy that is simply the verso of optimism, but descriptive of the same event: *You can't stop them coming* [emphasis in the original].

In a period when our porous borders have become a huge national issue, this seems inadequate, to say the least. But it is also typical. Rodriguez being Rodriguez, we are taken here to existential realms remote from anything as quotidian as data. Instead we get an avalanche of allusions, metaphors, and free associations, all allegedly pointing up the omnipresence of brownness in life.

It is relevant, we are told, that Sherlock Holmes is sometimes described as being "in a brown study." More mysteriously, Rodriguez says he is "writing brownly," and that he has "brown thoughts." "Brown is time," he tells us, especially in Mexico. We are also reminded that excrement is brown, which eventually leads to the thought that sodomy, too, is brown. (Rodriguez, who is gay, identifies himself as a "queer Catholic Indian Spaniard" and has trouble not talking about this dimension of his life.) Canada is said to be brown. Ditto for God. Also:

DAN SELIGMAN *is a contributing editor at* Forbes.

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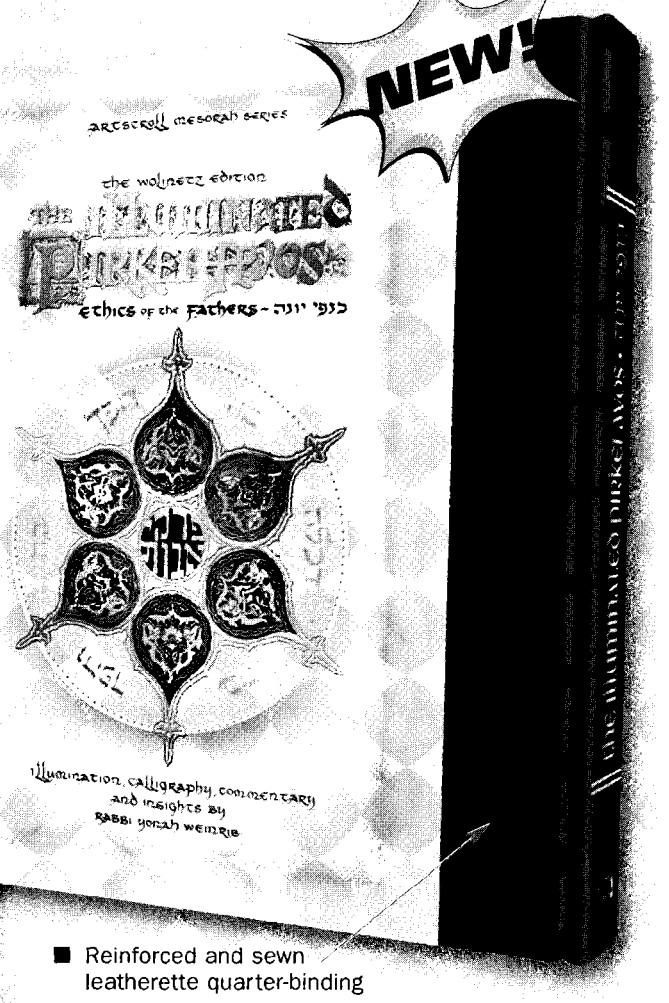
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The Life and Work of Leslie Fiedler
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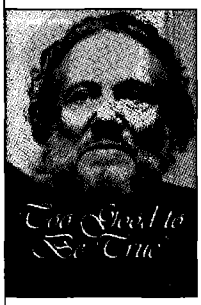

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"By brown I mean love." Of additional possible relevance is a passage in the acknowledgements crediting a volume by William Gass with the title *On Being Blue*: "I am indebted to a book browning on my shelf."

Weirdest of all is when Rodriguez turns, and then keeps returning, to the theme of brown "impurity." "The most important theme of my writing now is impurity," he says, referring to the miscegenation—conquistadores mating with mestizos—that spawned the brown race. Labeling this "impurity," in a book that claims to be celebrating brownness, seems merely perverse, even for an author plainly smitten by his "paradoxes" and unbothered by the possibility that others may see them plainly as confusions. But then again, "books should confuse" is another of Rodriguez's poetic pronouncements. By that arresting standard his book delivers.

Soul of the Game

The New Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract
by Bill James
Free Press. 998 pp. $45.00

Reviewed by
David Guaspari

THE SOUL of America is routinely sought in baseball. What often turns up, of course, is the seeker's boyhood self. Still, it is not foolish to ask whether we would be different, or become different, if some other public pleasure took baseball's place.

That question has been the territory of the game's elegists—a classy bunch, from the poets Marianne Moore and Robert Frost to the novelist John Updike and the essayist and *New Yorker* editor Roger Angell. Bill James—who writes racy and demotic, if sometimes garrulous, prose—is an exemplar of the fan as reason-giving animal, or analyst. He began baseball's scientific revolution in 1977 by circulating his first *samizdat* volume of "abstracts." His project: to mine the game's records in new ways in order to investigate what, if any, of its traditional lore might be true. He was looking for the soul of baseball.

The New Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract is really two books united by not much more than affection for the game. The first part, largely anecdotal, offers essays about each decade from the 1870's to the 1990's, and another essay on the Negro Leagues. Who were the game's heroes and villains, what baseball news made the sports page (or police blotter), what were the ballparks like, the uniforms, the equipment, nicknames, strategies, slang? James revels in baseball's Dickensian eccentricity, providing comedy (lists of juicy names like Yats Wuestling and Nemo Gaines), whimsy (Mrs. James picks the best-and worst-looking players of each decade), and sentiment (tales of hard luck).

In the second part of the book, James introduces a new measure of individual performance on the field, which he then uses to choose and rank the 100 best players of all time and the 100 best at each position. Most readers will no doubt skip directly to this second part, but that would surely not please James. For he calls himself a historian—and baseball is one of the rare American preoccupations in which history runs deep.

Some of that is an accident of mere longevity. Baseball was popular before the Civil War, has inevitably reflected cultural and demographic shifts, was shamed by segregation and partially redeemed by Jackie Robinson (who belongs high on the list of American heroes). But there are also reasons deeply

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rooted in the nature of the game. One of them is continuity: top players have long careers, and a favorite may easily span one's own trip from childhood to parenthood. Then, too, the linear action—attention moving from pitcher to batter, to fielder, to runner—lends itself to lucid narrative; a baseball game can be *told*, with credit and blame assigned. All these tabulations invite, and justify, comparisons across the generations.

The important baseball numbers record long-haul totals and averages, rather than momentary performance peaks like sprints, leaps, or tosses. Merit shows not in the confines of a single game but in the long run—a 162-game season or a twenty-year career. Baseball, the province of dailiness, showcases bourgeois virtues appropriate to a commercial republic. (Football is the game for Achilles.) A player must not be enflamed with adrenaline but "relaxed and alert" (George F. Will). There are many bad days at the office: as Roger Angell famously says, the game consists largely of failure. A team will be in contention for a league pennant if it loses "only" four out of every ten games; a very good batter makes twice as many outs as hits.

Which brings us to the record book. To a nonfan, this is an eye-glazing artifact. By contrast, a fan (or a sportswriter or broadcaster) who is stuck in the pre-scientific age may mistake its raw entries for knowledge: for answers, regardless of the question. What makes a batting champ a batting champ? What else if not the highest batting average?

In part two, Bill James asks (with myriad digressions) who is better. There is only one way to answer this in fundamental terms: whoever helps his team to win more games. And how is that determined? In James's hands, the process unfolds as a rational reduction—from the winning of games, to the scoring and preventing of runs, to measurable acts of individual players. His is a model of empirical inquiry, and it offers the pleasure of engaging with a mind at work—framing questions, teasing answers from imperfect information, judging how seriously to take the results.

Here is a snippet, drawn from James's discussion of fielding (that is, defense). The technical problem is that all fielding data are heavily biased by context—by who else is on the field. The complex details of James's proposed solution can be found in a separate book, *Win Shares*, co-authored with Jim Henzler*—and James is mighty pleased with the results: "Please understand that I am not claiming that [my] analysis of fielding performance is

* STATS Inc., 728 pp., $29.95.

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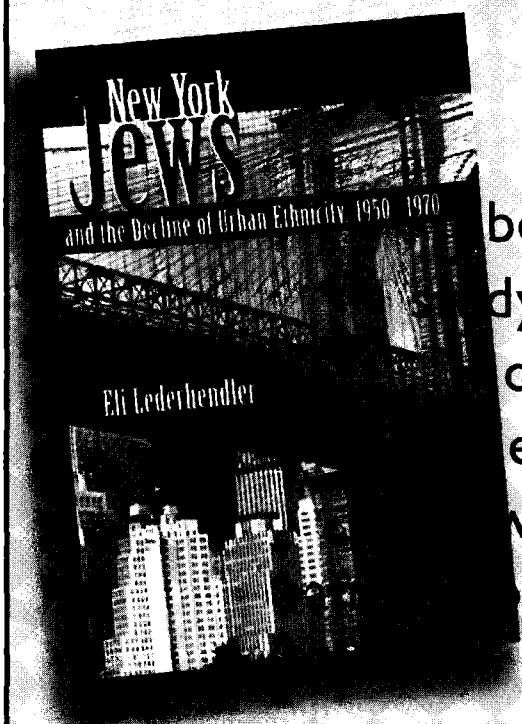

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better than any previous analysis of fielding. . . . I am claiming that [it] is *vastly* better . . . , light years better." The *Historical Abstract* offers something that might be titled *Prolegomena to Any Future Fielding Statistics*, and it demolishes the measures currently in use.

One example will have to suffice. A standard measure of defensive performance is "fielding percentage"—essentially, the fraction of more-or-less routine plays that a fielder executes successfully. But a fatal flaw in this standard is disclosed by an easily overlooked fact—namely, the fielding percentages of very good and very bad teams are virtually indistinguishable (about 98 percent). A moment's thought explains why: someone who cannot consistently make routine plays will not be playing in the major leagues. Fielding percentage measures a skill in which the relevant population shows little variation.

James's discussion here, a widely applicable lesson in informed skepticism, has resonance beyond itself. Is it too much to hope that a fan who has learned to sniff out junk baseball might recognize the scent of other nonsense numbers—the "50,000" child abductions every year (I cite from memory), the "150,000" yearly deaths from anorexia?

Sport at its best has claims on our attention because it celebrates public virtues like fairness and the aspiration to excel. (Not the least of its benefits: a zone in which schoolchildren need not respect the official lie that, to quote Kurt Vonnegut, "there's no difference between anybody.") Baseball has special claims because it quietly endorses everyday republican rectitude. We would indeed be different without it—and giving it up would show that we had changed.

Bill James thinks provocatively on a subject worthy of thought. His book offers fans the pleasures, and the liberation, of those stubborn pre-postmodern questions: who is best, and why?

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Where the Flat Tax Goes from Here

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In 1981 Robert Hall and I proposed a comprehensive 19 percent flat tax to replace the U.S. personal and corporate income taxes. The idea resulted in numerous congressional bills during the 1980s. It underpinned President Reagan's Tax Reform Act of 1986, which resulted in two rates, 15 and 28 percent, down from a top rate of 70 percent when Reagan took office in 1981. In 1992 presidential candidate Jerry Brown, followed by Steve Forbes in 1996, reinvigorated the flat tax. Congressional Republican leaders chimed in with their support. Nonetheless, since 1991, the U.S. tax code has regressed; three new higher rates were added, with the top rate increased from 28.0 to 39.6 percent.

Despite regression in the United States, the flat tax has been successful in several new countries that emerged from the breakup of the Soviet Union. Estonia enacted a 26 percent flat tax beginning in 1994. Latvia followed suit with a 25 percent flat tax in 1995.

The biggest flat tax success story comes from Russia. In 2001 a 13 percent flat tax took effect, replacing three brackets with a top rate of 30 percent. The new code improved incentives and compliance. In 2001 revenue increased 28 percent in real, inflation-adjusted terms. Effective January 1, 2002, the government reduced the corporate rate from 35 to 24 percent and recently proposed a major reform for small business enterprises (SBEs). SBEs with no more than twenty employees and turnover below $320,000 will be able to pay the lesser of a flat 20 percent tax on profits or a flat 8 percent tax on revenues. SBEs will be exempt from value-added tax, sales tax, property tax, and social insurance tax. Other former Soviet bloc countries may follow in Russia's footsteps.

In April 2002 Singapore proposed a major restructuring of its tax system. The centerpiece is a reduction in corporate and personal income tax rates. In the next three years, corporate rates will fall from 24.5 to 20.0 percent, and the top personal income tax rate, from 26 to 20 percent. With this measure, Singapore extends a process of marginal tax-rate reductions that cut the top personal rate from a high of 55 percent in 1961 to 40 percent in 1978, 34 percent in 1980, 30 percent in 1982, and 26 percent in 1985. During this period, the threshold at which the top rate bites increased from S$90,000 to S$750,000 (US$1=S$1.80).

To fill out the story, Hong Kong maintains a flat tax of 15 percent on personal income. The Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey impose a 20 percent flat tax. The Freedom Party in Austria proposed a flat tax during the 1999 national election and became part of Austria's governing coalition for the first time in modern history. Other European parties are considering the flat tax in their economic platforms.

All in all, the flat tax is alive and well overseas. Now if only in the United States!

— Alvin Rabushka

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